

**COMUNEROS:
COMMUNITY AND INDIGENEITY IN SARAGURO, ECUADOR**

**JAMES R. STANGER
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Abstract

This thesis examines the concept of the indigenous community in Saraguro, Ecuador. I explore the myriad and co-existing ideas of community and community participation at the local level, focusing on two of the defining practices of community integration: monthly assemblies and communal labour parties. Acknowledging the role of the state in the production of local communities, the historical and contemporary relations between highland Ecuadorian indigenous communities and the state are examined in an effort to contextualize the importance placed on communities as autonomous spaces. Centering around a nationwide indigenous-led protest in May of 2010, ideas of mestizaje, modernization, historical fears of the Indian, and community justice are discussed to help analyze the continuously negotiated boundary between indigenous communities and the nation-state. Finally, competing conceptualizations of indigeneity are examined with respect to a recent neo-Inkaic cultural revitalization movement, partly NGO sponsored, that has emerged in the area.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

One cloudy afternoon, soon after I had arrived in the small town of Saraguro and while I was still living in the tourist hostel that perches overlooking the town itself, I was returning along the rutted dirt road from the market when I passed a middle aged indigenous man. I nodded politely in his direction, and he waved me over, asking, as it seemed everyone did, where I was from. Surprised that I could speak passable, if rudimentary Spanish, he invited me to sit with him along the grassy bank, inquiring about why I was there, what about my family, what Canada was like. Enrique, he said his name was. Originally from Illincho, a nearby indigenous community, he had been living in the town of Saraguro itself for years. His worn, dirty, black felt hat sat high on his head, his rubber boots exposing his knees below short, black pants. As a group of teachers passed down the road, coming from a meeting at the hostel, he paused to nod to each one, waited until they had passed, and proposed we go to the nearby *tienda* (small shop) for a drink. While we downed warm *trago* (cheap sugar cane alcohol) and conversed to the curiosity of the two other indigenous men similarly drinking, two young women dressed in bright sweat pants pushed baby strollers up the hill. “My neighbours,” he explained, “they used to be indigenous, but not anymore. It’s a shame.”

My brief meeting with Enrique evoked many of the themes and experiences that I was to encounter in the coming months: the curiosity that a foreigner can still elicit, the social importance of drinking, the deference that poor indigenous persons may still show to those richer, whiter than them, the fear of culture loss. The process of *mestizaje*, of cultural mixing that in Saraguro is synonymous with shedding one’s identity as

indigenous, has been documented throughout the Andes for decades¹. The women's clothes, Enrique went on to explain, were the markers of their loss of indigenous identification. Rather than the traditional *anaku* (skirt), the Saraguro version of which is long, black, and pleated, these women chose the sweat pants and t-shirts that many Saraguros say is just one symptom of a generation that is losing its identity. Others say that the youth just don't want to farm or herd cattle as their parents did, or live in the countryside, or wear their hair long. I was there to try and study one other aspect of indigeneity whose supposed degradation is being lamented: the indigenous community.

Saraguro: A brief overview

The *cantón* (county) of Saraguro is located in the southern Ecuadorian province of Loja, about 60 km. north of the provincial capital of Loja, and 150 km. south of Cuenca, Ecuador's third largest city and capital of Azuay province. Saraguro is the name of the canton, parish, the town center, as well as the indigenous ethnic group that is home to the area (see Ogburn 2008 for a discussion on the possible origins of Saraguro as an ethnic group and place name). The town of Saraguro rests in a valley formed by the Paquishapa river, through which the Panamerican highway winds, connecting Saraguro parish to Urdaneta in the north, and San Lucas to the south. Saraguro county has a population of about 30,000 inhabitants spread between the town, parish centers, and a number of smaller villages and communities. The lowest valleys have an elevation under 1500

¹ Mestizaje (cultural mixing) in Saraguro is popularly understood as a process of acculturation or culture loss that results in a decline of appreciation or expression of indigenous identities. In spite of this fear, indigenous groups are not disappearing, though the content of particular indigenous identities may be changing. Within the anthropological literature, mestizaje is more commonly associated with state projects aimed at constructing a singular national racial/social category, attempting to paint over or transform existing differences.

meters, and the peak of Tayta Pulla, the mountain that dominates the panorama around Saraguro, tops out at just under 3400 meters. Land used for agriculture is not restricted by elevation, though most land above 2800 meters is largely pasture. The climate is temperate, with warm days alternating with very cool nights, though frost is rare. Most of the region has adequate rainfall throughout the year, but the eastern part of the canton is drier than other areas.

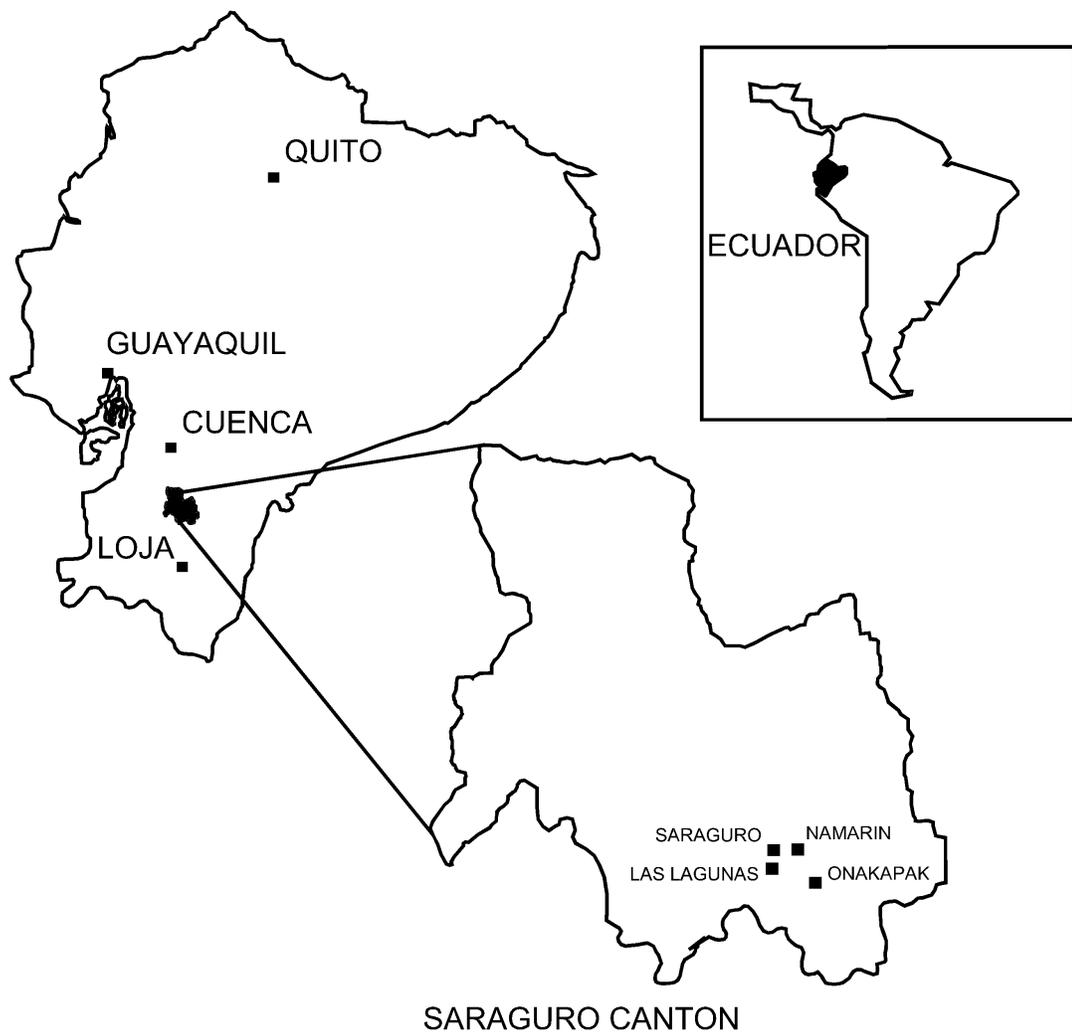


Figure 1: Map of Saraguro, Ecuador. Map by Brett Freeman.

In the immediate vicinity of the town center are a handful of indigenous Saraguro communities whose members variously participate in agriculture, cattle herding, weaving, wage labour in Saraguro or elsewhere, education (as teachers, principals, and administrators in Saraguro itself or within the Inka Rimay indigenous bilingual intercultural education network), non-profit social development organizations, as well as a whole range of other careers both rural and urban. Due to the increasing need for reliance on a cash economy, many indigenous Saraguros still live in these rural communities and supplement an agro-pastoral livelihood with regular or more informal work outside of the communities. Of course, it would be more accurate to say that much of the younger generations (those under 30) may supplement wage work with occasional agriculture and herding, while many in the older generations (those over 50) have amassed sufficient land and resources to live almost exclusively off agriculture and herding practices, selling cheese and the occasional cow, sheep, or guinea pig. As is commonplace in Ecuador, younger Saraguros, in their late teens and even into their thirties, often migrate to urban centers for education and work for extended periods of time, though their lives may often be split between rural and urban spaces². Many choose to return home when their luck fails, when they finish university and find employment in Saraguro, or when they inherit or buy enough land to support a household of their own

² While Saraguro men are more likely to engage in regular wage labour either in a city or in the township of Saraguro itself, women also migrate for education and in search of work. Both sexes are responsible for the majority of tasks related to agriculture and herding, with the exception of plowing, a male task. Women, meanwhile, are more likely to be responsible for tending to the guinea pigs, rabbits, and chickens, as well as most domestic chores. Still, there are many exceptions, and with the availability of a daycare in the community, dual parent households may be supported by both parents engaged in primary wage labour or steady employment in a range of fields.

(see Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999; 2009 for similar cases in Otavalo and Tigua, respectively).



Figure 2: Overlooking the Saraguro Valley.

The town of Saraguro is often a sleepy little parochial town, livening up on Sundays for market and church goers, its dusty dirt roads filled to the brim on these days as people from all over the canton go about their business buying produce, fish, meat, housewares, bootlegged DVDs and the latest CDs from the stalls set up at the *feria libre*, the open air market. The best deals can be had at the end of the day, when tired vendors have mostly stopped calling and enticing customers, and are eager to sell their last bunches of plantains, apples, mangoes, oranges, and other fruit that is shipped in from coastal plantations or farms in the warmer eastern (*oriente*) lowlands and make their way

through the regional highland markets. The rest of the week, shops and tiendas, and the few restaurants sit mainly empty, with high school students in their brown or blue uniforms sucking on *bolos* (juice frozen in a slender plastic bag) and chatting in the two plazas that form the heart of the town. On Sundays, though, white pick up trucks and other vehicles crowd the main road along with interprovincial busses and local taxis, each taking whole families and their goods in and out of town. Resting from shopping, men and women crowd around the cement bleachers off to the side of the weathered wooden market stalls to watch men play 3-on-3 volleyball. The high stakes wages placed by teams, ranging from a few dollars a head to 150 dollars or more, mean that the tensions and excitement can be very high, providing quite a bit of entertainment. Groups of men sit on the sparse grass where it can be found flanking the court, and toss insults and off-coloured jokes at the players and each other as they share bottles of beer, passing around a single cup between themselves.

Down the road, partially paved with cement blocks, the main plaza's benches are filled with families, groups of friends, and young couples who search for what little shade is provided by the tall trees lining walking paths in the plaza in the midday sun. Those streets, uneven, only partially finished, and usually half blocked by large piles of sand and dirt from ongoing road and building construction, were supposedly part of an election promise of the *alcalde* (mayor), who in the past years, some claim, has only succeeded in paving a few. The downpours of rainy months, compounded by poor drainage, mean that the usually dusty roads get eaten away by the quickly flowing streams that cut trenches and potholes into the surface, making a muddy mess that people hop and skip to cross.

Family run tiendas side with little restaurants that offer mostly set meals that come with a soup, rice, and a bit of vegetable and stewed meat. Lining the main plaza are a number of credit unions bearing such hopeful names as “*Semilla del progreso*” (the seed of progress), as well as a local tourism agency that offers community tourism packages in conjunction with the network of indigenous operated hostel and lodging houses, handicraft vendors and tour guides. The municipal and utility company offices sit beside printing, photo, and clothing shops, while across the plaza the large stone church’s three spires dominate the view. Inside, the long, darkened hall is lined with wooden pews that lead up to the typically large and ostentatious altars. Above it all, the 3 Inka laws are scrawled in marble: *ama quilla, ama lulla, ama shua* (don’t be lazy, don’t lie, don’t steal).

The Kichwa script in the church hints at the racial and ethnic heterogeneity that is part of Saraguro, as is the case for much of rural Ecuador. Linda Belote has previously described the Saraguro town centre as a predominantly white space, whose mestizo inhabitants jealously guarded the urban area and resented those Sunday markets when their streets were overrun with Indians, bringing with them their smells and their aesthetic (1978). The frequent backyard cornfields of the outlying Saraguro streets speak to the changing face of the town, as quite a number of indigenous families have moved in to the center in recent decades. Now, indigenous and mestizo children learn together in classrooms, and certain restaurants, boutiques, tiendas and bakeries have indigenous owners and employees. Racism persists, though, and the derisive glances that well-off white townsfolk give to groups of indigenous men drinking trago from clear plastic bags

as they sit in the main plaza are evidence enough of the cultural and class divides that continue.

A short history of Saraguro cantón

The pre-Inkaic inhabitants of the Saraguro canton were most likely a sub-group of Cañaris, an ethnic group currently centered just north of Cuenca, while the area south of Saraguro, around contemporary Loja, was likely populated by Paltas (Ogburn 2008:296). When the Inkas conquered the area around 1460 CE, they established an administrative centre in the valley, along with *tambos* (waystations) along the Chinchaysuyu road that ran through Saraguro, connecting the Inka capital Cuzco with Quito (Ogburn 2010:171). As was common with regions that resisted conquest, the Inka administration likely removed a portion of the local population, replacing them instead with more docile and loyal ethnic groups, possibly from the Lake Titicaca or Cuzco regions. This process of *mitimae* meant that just before the arrival of the Spanish, the population of the Saraguro area was most likely composed of people of various ethnic groups, and since the Inka state had a policy of strictly enforcing ethnic boundaries, there was likely no singular Saraguro ethnicity at this time.

With the coming of the Spanish conquest of the Andes, however, ethnic boundaries among the native populations were largely ignored by the state in favour of a dual racial system, with Spaniards on the one end, and the general class of Indians on the other, opening up the possibilities for the creation, destruction, or mixing of ethnic identities. It is in the early colonial period that the region of Saraguro appears to have been given that name, likely stemming from a local indigenous place name (Ogburn

2008). Like the Inkas, the Spanish established a waystation in the valley and extracted tribute from local populations, though Spanish colonial tribute is considered to have been far more onerous since both labour and goods were demanded. Still, the inhabitants of Saraguro seem to have been less devastated by their incorporation into the Spanish colonial system than those in other areas. Their tribute obligations were largely centered around the maintenance of the tambo, which was preferable to the often lethal mining obligations in the nearby Zaruma gold mines. Though a priest was stationed in the area by the mid 16th century, other contact with the Spanish administration was lessened by the relative remoteness and insignificance of the area. Indigenous inhabitants were by and large able to maintain their agricultural landbase (as was required by Spanish law - though landlords, indigenous and Spanish, were often known to corrupt this practice), even adopting cattle herding and taking advantage of the local tambo in order to market their goods (J. Belote 1984; Ogburn 2008:306).

What emerged from the long process of Spanish colonialism was the eventual ethnogenesis of Saraguro as an ethnic group, considered locally to be descended from Inka nobility, Cañaris, displaced native Andeans from other regions, or any mixture of these. While in the mid 16th century native inhabitants of the region were still referred to by being “of” Saraguro: “indio natural de Saraguro” (A. Anda Aquirre 1980:130, quoted in Ogburn 2008:308), by the latter half of that century a number of Indians living in other areas are recorded as using the surname Saraguro, hinting at an emerging Saraguro ethnic identity (Ogburn 2008:309). By the late 1800s, Saraguro had remained a largely indigenous parish, with a common style of dress having been noted among its population:

Saraguro is of good population, its sons, almost all Indians, are well muscled and robust, and all dress in black, and dress thusly, we are told, to conserve the mourning of their lost independence. (Cevallos, *Geografía de la Republica del Ecuador* 1888:326, quoted in J. Belote 1984:21)

The choice of black clothing is still common among most Saraguros, who continue to relate it either to their lost independence or as mourning dress for Atahualpa, the Inka lord.

A number of authors in the 19th and early parts of the 20th centuries have remarked upon the superior nature of the Saraguro native to other indigenous groups, noting their subservience to the *gente decente* (decent/cultured folk, meaning white-mestizo), their dedication to work, their independence of means and their strong will:

The great majority of its [Saraguro's] population is Indian, but a new type of Indian ... still humble to the *gente decente* when facing them singly, but verging on insolence when gathered in groups with chicha at hand. Here each owns a little patch of land and refuses serfdom. (Franck, *Vagabonding Down the Andes* 1917:203-204, quoted in J. Belote 1984:22)

The Saraguros were considered to be a model of positive indigeneity; proud, resilient, and free, in contrast to other ethnic indigenous groups who were considered to be more reckless, more dangerous, less “advanced.” For indigenist writers of this period, the Saraguros would have represented the redeeming potential of the Indian race, rather than the unalterable backwardness and poverty that other groups seemed to be mired in.

Relations between the indigenous Saraguros and white Saragurenses, similar to other areas of Latin America, have historically been unequal, a matter Linda Belote has documented in some detail for the 1960s and 1970s, the decades following the construction of the Panamerican highway in the 1940s that placed Saraguro once again

along the main North-South road, providing a brief economic boom for the town (L. Belote 1978). In these decades, the privileged sociopolitical position enjoyed by white townspeople was contrasted with their relative economic poverty when compared to the rural, landowning indigenous Saraguros. With land and cattle, it was the indigenous population that provided local storeowners, moneylenders, and officials with the business that kept them afloat. Of course, subsistence farmers purchase little, a constant source of agitation for the townspeople who imagined the great wealth that Indians must conceal (L. Belote 1984; see also Weismantel 2001). In truth, while some indigenous Saraguros had relatively large amounts of wealth in land and cattle, those assets did not translate into an easy source of readily available cash. Concerned for their children's inheritance, money was often, and continues to be, funneled into the purchase of more agricultural and pastoral assets destined for inheritances. In the past century, partly due to the national agrarian reforms that opened up tracts of the amazonian basin for settlement from the highlands (at times further marginalizing and displacing lowland indigenous groups), a large number of Saraguros have colonized sections of the Oriente (eastern lowlands) in the province of Zamora-Chinchipe (J. Belote 1984:1).

Because of the demands of agricultural work, as well as the exclusivity of the local schools, Saraguros were not often educated beyond the third grade until the late 1960s, when a high school was first opened in the town. Though Saraguros acknowledged the importance of literacy, they considered three years adequate to learn reading and writing, and, besides, the high school did not permit Indian students. The local priest, however, opened up admission for select indigenous students in 1971, and

along with a group of Saraguro boys who had left the cantón to further their education elsewhere, and a group of girls sponsored by the priest to study, these young Saraguros had opened up a path to advancement through education. More recently, a range of intercultural, bilingual elementary schools have been built in the indigenous communities in the region, though they still bear the stigma of being second rate, previously teaching only basic math and some rudimentary skills that left little likelihood of advancement into higher education. Today, Saraguros are among the most educated ethnic group in Ecuador, and young *indígenas* (indigenous persons) study at state and private universities in Loja, Cuenca, Quito, and even farther north. A number of those first students later returned to Saraguro and have since become doctors, lawyers, teachers, social scientists, politicians and indigenous activists (L. Belote 1978:214; Linda Belote, personal communication: April 04, 2010). Since then, while many Saraguros continue to rely on small scale agro-pastoral production, the possibilities for indigenous lifeways have opened up, but municipal politics continues to be dominated by town mestizos. In addition, two local social development organizations, *Fundación Jatari* and *Fundación Kawsay* boast of a largely indigenous professional staff.

Indigenous Saraguro dress and ethnicity

The Saraguros are one of the iconic indigenous ethnic groups in Ecuador, along with the Otavalos and the Shuar. By briefly discussing indigenous dress and style, this section will act as an introduction to one of the key symbols that marks indigenous Saraguro ethnicity in this heterogenous area. Both sexes wear their hair in long braided ponytails. Most typically, men sport low cut black canvas shoes or boots, with black

socks that lead up to bare calves, since Saraguro men wear *cortes* (short black pants traditionally made of wool, but cut off trousers are now more common). A white collared shirt, black vest, black poncho, and black felt hat complete the traditional attire, though for men the black *cortes* are the essential piece, and a short sleeved shirt and jacket are often chosen instead of a button down shirt. For ceremonial and important occasions, the Saraguros are known for their wide brimmed, white pressed wool hats that are often painted with black spots or patterns on the underside for style. Day to day, though, the black felt hat is more common.

Women's iconic dress includes a black felt hat similar to men's, and a black shawl in place of a poncho, held together with a silver starburst pin, or *tupu*. Layers of *collares*, beadwork necklaces, give a bit of colour and individuality, as do the embroidered white, pastel, or coloured blouses that are most typical. Instead of *cortes*, women wear two skirts, a *pollera* (colourful underskirt) and an *anaku* (black, pleated outer skirt). The bottom of the *pollera* is often embroidered with stylish flower patterns, and gives a little flair. *Anakus* are most often made from long bolts of acrylic cloth, since traditionally made woolen ones, measuring upwards of 3 meters in length, are prohibitively expensive. The *anaku* and *pollera* combination are held up by a *faja*, a patterned woven belt, and taken together the layers of cloth often make a bulge of sorts around the waist, which is not quite in touch with younger tastes that prefer waist-hugging, thin jeans and tank tops. Older women, as well as teachers and other professionals, wear this outfit regularly, though some creative young women have made certain adjustments that distinguish their look from their mothers or grandmothers. For example, wrapping their skirts in such a

way as to diminish the bulge of fabric around the waist, or foregoing the *pollera* altogether allow young women to make a certain compromise in taste when they wear the more traditional garb. For festive occasions such as graduations, women might complement their outfit with fashionable heels. It is quite a sight to see whole families dressed in their best in this way, and mothers worry about making sure their absent minded young son hasn't misplaced his hat, or that their daughter's anaku is ironed just right to tighten and even out the folds.



Figure 3: Saraguro women with their children on Easter Sunday.

This level of dress, though, is of course reserved for the most part to professionals, important occasions as well as market days, with women more likely to dress to this ideal than men. More often than not, especially for work in the fields and

garden, with cattle, or around the house women prefer to wear cheaply made sweat pants and zippered sweaters that are certainly more easy to clean and more casual. Saraguro men of all ages are more likely to sport cortes than women are to wear anakus. Instead of white collared shirts, though, men prefer to wear short sleeved shirts of all kinds, including plain coloured ones, soccer jerseys, shirts bearing emblems of companies or social development projects, and metal band t-shirts among much of the youth. These t-shirts, always black, bear the names of the most popular metal bands, most notably Metallica and Motorhead. To the disapproval of many in the older generations, this is the music that is blared at parties, from CD players at home, and from cellphones whenever a group of young men get together. The “satanic” imagery and assumed to be crude lyrics are a common topic of conversation, with some seeing this style as the result of an ever encroaching globalized Western identity. Others, of course, simply say that at least the younger men are still interested in listening to and playing music. While the music is no longer a traditional variety, the opinion is that music has long played a role in Saraguro life, and that this is in many ways a continuation of that history. From my perspective, the black t-shirts fit well with the Saraguro aesthetic, and only a rare few young men choose to wear jeans instead of cortes, following in general terms the dress code of their fathers. In many ways, these *rockeros*, as they are called, do not see their style and taste to be in contradiction with an identity as indigenous, and have often defended their cultural and personal identities to me as indigenous Saraguros. Their choice of music accorded, in their eyes, with an attachment to the cultural tradition that many others criticized them for straying from.

Many Saraguros see the choice of clothing as a signifier of their ethnic identity. Accordingly, a rejection of this aesthetic could signal a rejection of self-identification as indigenous, as Linda Belote and Jim Belote (1984) have documented for the region. They cite one example in particular that evokes commonly held ideas about the relationship between dress and identity in Saraguro:

Indigenas sometimes hire *blancos* (whites) to do manual labour. To be reduced to doing manual labour is discomfort enough for a *blanco*. To do it for an *indígena* is doubly humiliating. In one case an *indígena* man who hired a *blanco* labor crew to clear land for him in the Oriente woke up one morning after a drinking binge to find his hair had been cut. He was then informed by his hung-over *blanco* laborers that they had cut his hair to make him a *blanco* like them, and thus a more acceptable employer ... The shorn Saraguro *indígena* rejected this attempt at forced transculturation and bore his shaggy hair with great embarrassment until it grew again to braidable length. (Belote, L. and Belote, J. 1984:37)

Hair is perhaps even more important a marker of Saraguro indigeneity than dress, since most Saraguros (women in particular) wear quite a range of clothes. The idea that a simple haircut can be an act of ethnic boundary crossing is a bit fantastic, but it adequately encapsulates commonly held ideas about Saraguro style and its relationship to ethnic identity. Even wearing jeans and a black, “satanic” t-shirt, a young man with his long hair pulled back into a single braid wears what is understood as an indigenous Saraguro identifier. Sitting around the table after dinner one evening with the indigenous family that I had come to live with, Linda put on a CD of Kichwa ballads sung by a range of musical groups from Otavalo to entertain her children as they helped clean up. Translating the romantic (and off colour) lyrics for the rest of us, none of whom speak fluent Kichwa, Linda expressed admiration that Otavalo indígenas have been so

successful in maintaining their traditions (exemplified in this case by widespread Kichwa fluency), a common sentiment for many in Saraguro. “*Pero ya empiezan a cortar los pelos,*” she remarked: they’ve begun cutting their hair. Much like the indigenous man whose white workers cut his hair to make him a more appropriate employer, indigenous Saraguros agree that cutting your hair short is a statement about identity and self, not simply style.

Indigenous Saraguros have gone from being largely excluded from education, politics, and positions of respect in the town center to being one of the most wealthy and well-educated indigenous groups in the country. Still, poverty is widespread in the indigenous communities, and many Saraguros live long periods of time outside of their home communities, away from their families as they try to establish themselves or seek a better life. As is the case with many places in Andean South America, migration, increased integration with cash economies and decreasing land availability mean that the “traditional” lifeways of individuals have changed, a sentiment expressed in informal conversations that often turn to how one’s grandparents lived more cleanly, how one’s children don’t dress as they should, how hardly anyone speaks Kichwa, or how no one grows or cooks all the varieties of local produce they used to. It is in this context that a recent cultural revitalization movement has become somewhat influential in the area, seeking to “disinter” (as one proponent put it) the historic Saraguro lifeways, and link them to a resurrected Inkaic tradition. Among the aims of this movement is a dedication to community, characterized by mutual aid and a common people.

Framing research

The community as an idea seems to hold particular discursive and moral weight in a fantastically wide variety of fields, both academic and popular. We might hear talk of Indigenous communities, suburban communities, rural communities, church communities, virtual communities, the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community, and a dizzying range of other communities that exist at varying structural levels in various societies. Some of these communities are seen to be built upon a shared space (Indigenous, rural, suburban communities), while others are marked by a conspicuous absence of a shared space (virtual communities, the GLBT community). Members in others are aligned along a shared interest, while particularly with the idea of an international community, it is difficult to see just what its members all have in common. With such a wide variety of supposed entities marked as communities, we might ask whether the community concept has any meaning at all. But precisely because the community idea can be, and has been, articulated in so many forms it would be sensible to concede that quite apart from being devoid of meaning, the community is overflowing with it. So much so, that Gerald Creed has written that “the term has become part of the commonsensical way we understand and navigate the world” (2006b:6).

As an example, Miranda Joseph’s marxist critique of the GLBT community in San Francisco highlights many of the contradictions centering around the community idea. For her, the community connotes those “cherished ideals of co-operation, equality, and communion” (2002:ii), relying on an “ideal of homogeneity” to construct a “ready-made basis for collective action” that often paints over the power differences that exist within

the supposedly equal and secular public sphere, both within and outside of the constructed community (2002:xxii). Joseph's theoretical project is to illustrate how, contrary to popular belief, the civic sector and all its constituent communities are necessary for the continued existence of neo-liberal, capitalist nation-states (2002:xxx). The irony of this is, of course, that so often community (and the rural community in particular) is rooted in the past: they are remnants of those outdated traditions that fight against a modernity characterized by capitalist accumulation. Community comes to stand for the moralities lost in capitalist societies; for harmony, for the local, for a homogeneity increasingly attacked by the global flow of people and ideas. For some critics of community, this association with an envisioned and idealized past lives on in the community as goals for the future, and for Joseph, it makes unequal accumulation more palatable while providing producers with individual niches to market their products (Creed 2006b:5).

The original research upon which this thesis is based has as a primary goal to examine one particular type of community, the indigenous community, as both a site for the production of competing notions of what it means to be Indian, and as an outcome of these contestations by the state, international and local NGOs, and indigenous peoples themselves. Indigenous communities in Ecuador are, like communities elsewhere, loaded with meanings that speak more to the aspirational ideals of stakeholders than to the lived realities of those who reside in these communities. Indeed, the *comuna de indigenas* (indigenous community) in Ecuador stems from a state project that aimed to solve the "Indian Problem": what to do with what was seen as the mass of uneducated, unhygienic,

backwards people that, because of their often autonomous means of production and self-sustainability, were seen as impediments to the progress of a modern, rational, capitalist society. The 1937 *Ley de Comunas* (Communes Law) was the culmination of years of attempts to incorporate Indian subjects into the national sphere and to subdue the possibilities of rebellion that elite lawmakers saw embedded in the mostly indigenous rural highlands. Legal indigenous communities, it was thought, would provide the state with an avenue to the “intellectual, moral, and material improvement” of Indian lives, providing “a proper and safe place” for the state to guide Indian development (Lucero 2003:31). Contrary to the indentured peon,

The free *comunero* is a good worker, well-fed, dresses neatly, knows how to defend his rights before the usurpation of neighboring hacendados [large estate landowners], recovers abandoned zones of cultivation, utilizes irrigation.... (Pío Jaramillo Alvaredo 1980:150, quoted in Lucero 2003:30)

What began as a state attempt at increasing control over the indigenous countryside has since, however, become one of the key elements of a resurgent indigenous identity. Luis Macas, Saraguro politician and indigenous activist, writes that “The community is the essential organization of indigenous society. From what we understand, the institution of the community constitutes the fundamental axis that articulates and gives coherence to indigenous society” (2000, my translation). For contemporary indigenous activists, the indigenous community still represents an avenue towards modernity, but a modernity that is in opposition to the discourse presented by the state: community is the area for resistance, for the maintenance of indigenous traditions, for the cultivation of alternative practices. “‘Community’ can thus be at one time the

organizing principle of indigenista paternalism and social control and at another time the discursive terrain on which alternative political projects are constructed and legitimated” (Lucero 2003:41).

In his recent critical overview of the community concept, Gerald Creed provides a prospective theoretical approach to contemporary scholars who wish to unpack this multivocal idea and analyze it in ways that are reflective of its importance in local, ethnographic contexts. He summarizes with the somewhat philosophical statement “*Community is an aspiration envisioned as an entity*” (2006b:22). In essence, communities must be seen not so much as concrete socio-spatial categories, and instead interpreted mainly in terms of the ideals that they represent, those which proponents of community are attempting to bring to life. What is also important here is that communities are envisioned as entities, as wholes that are at least partially closed to the outside world. The community as an entity in its own right is part and parcel to the ideal that is aspired, and so communities come to be seen to act in ways that reflect their individuality and their wholeness. Communities are seen to act for themselves, as wholes, and become analogous to living organisms: they are something more than the systems of which they are made and have a will to act.

Accordingly, rather than seeing the rural indigenous community solely as an extant space, political unit, or form of social organization, this project sets out to explore the myriad and co-existing ideas of community and community participation, and how these are activated in various competing, but connected policies and practices. Local, municipal, NGO, and state perceptions of indigeneity are recognized as being inseparable

from the community idea, since the political forms that indigenous communities take rely on certain assumptions about how Indians supposedly do, or should, live.

The first objective of this thesis deals with the community as a unifying symbol of group membership, and asks to what degree living in an indigenous community governs or structures the lives of those who live in such a community. Older anthropological literature assumed the internal homogeneity of what was classified as the “closed, corporate peasant community” (see Wolf 1955; 1956; 1957; Wolf and Hansen 1972). More recently, scholars have shown how the (often competing) individual interests of community members are played out in the discourse of community membership and participation (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999; 2007). In acknowledging the divergent interests of those who claim membership in communities, it is necessary to detail what their unifying desires are, how those interests come to be established, and when they hold relevance. In the context of Ñamarín, a small indigenous community just outside the town of Saraguro, these issues will be presented in discussions about occasions of participation in what might be called community building (such as communal labour parties and community assemblies), and occasions of more informal, but very important participation, such as play, that is largely organized at the level of the community.

The second research question deals with state-society relations and membership in an indigenous community. Recent scholarship has focused on the dialectic nature of community formation, and how state policies articulate with local desires and ambitions to produce the realized forms of community organization (Clark 1994). Indigenous

communities in Ecuador are legal political entities, and are an ideal context to discuss forms of “domestication,” efforts undertaken by state-systems to further incorporate rural areas under stricter regimes of control, continuously fraught with difficulties posed by people who wish to remain more autonomous (cf. Scott 1998). The ideas of state membership and autonomy are commonly expressed in discussion among indigenous people in Saraguro, and are complicated by recent historical turns that have in certain ways brought indigenous communities into the fold of state membership. Local articulations of these issues are treated largely in the context of a nationwide indigenous-led strike in May of 2010 against proposed water regulation reforms. Indigenous groups picketed members of the national government, indigenous political leaders and the national indigenous federations called for a mobilization of indigenous communities, and many Saraguro communities answered the call by blockading the Panamerican highway; the main transport route running North-South along the Andean spine. The protests provide an opportunity to see, in action, the involvement of individuals, community leaders, NGOs, and activists in fomenting the indigenous movement against an encroaching state.

Finally, this research attempts to frame the relationship between indigenous identity and ideas of the community as they are evoked in Saraguro. Often, state policies, NGO initiatives, and indigenous activist positions regarding indigenous peoples assume or present a connection between indigenous groups and an envisioned rural community. Through an examination of two separate, but not entirely distinct, religious/historical feasting traditions; one Catholic and longstanding in the region, the other drawing on

Incaic precedents but set in the context of a relatively recent push for cultural revitalization, I will explore the significance of the community idea with respect to envisioned ideals of indigeneity.

The “community” in anthropology

The idea of the community lends an easy sense of togetherness and a moral backing, it conveys unity without having to prove it, and acts as a stand-in concept for organizational structures at many levels. These aspects of the community idea enable various actors to draw from its corpus of meaning almost without hesitation, though this in turn means the community is a relatively poor analytical concept. There are so many possible definitions of community that the term necessitates scholarly attention, and has been the subject of many debates within anthropology and other disciplines in various periods for decades, if not centuries. In a review of authorship concerning community, George Hillery (1995) counted 94 different definitions of the term that varied not only across disciplines, but often within them as well. The ubiquitous use of community requires scholars to be ever more attentive to their use of the term, while hopefully drawing out the role of various communities in particular circumstances in contemporary societies.

The scope of this review on the concept of community does not claim to be so vast as Hillery’s array of definitions. Instead, I trace a particular history of the community concept that will highlight some of the contradictions and traditions most important to a discussion of the concept in the Ecuadorian Andes. I do not wish to erase the contentiousness of the idea, but rather to draw attention to the rich and often counter-

intuitive implications of community. Much of the literature concerning the contemporary indigenous community stems from research in peasant studies, which concerns rural, often indigenous peoples that live on the margins of modern capitalist states (Creed 2006a). Many highland Andean indigenous groups, with their history of smallholder agricultural and pastoral production, previously organized as peasant groups before the dominant discourses, in the Ecuadorean state as in anthropology, shifted from a language based on class to one focused on ethnicity.

The idea of the community is a relatively old concept in anthropology and other social sciences, and it serves as an entry point into the field of rural sociology and the concept of the folk-urban continuum. Though this area of analysis may suffer from a lack of critical merit with respect to newer systems of thought, it is important to trace this history of the community concept within anthropology since it serves to illustrate the close associations between a popular romantic envisioning of the community concept and critical approaches to the community idea. Indeed, many of the characteristics associated with the folk society remain deeply embedded in the community concept as it is evoked in contexts of indigenous revitalization in Saraguro.

Robert Redfield elaborated on the already somewhat established concept of the folk-urban continuum, and proposed it as an analytical scheme, a mental construct, through which anthropologists and sociologists might organize aspects of societies by the characteristics that they share (Redfield 1947:294). As such, parts of societies may be aligned along a continuum that constructs two wholly ideal extremes: the folk and the urban. Through time, a transition from the folk type to the urban type “could represent the

course of history,” though the concept itself is not supposed to represent any actual course of history, just as it is not supposed to represent any real society (Mintz 1953:136).

The aspects of a folk society as elaborated by Redfield contribute to a romantic picture of social relations in the countryside. Folk societies are

small, isolated, nonliterate, and homogenous, with a strong sense of group solidarity. The ways of living are conventionalized into that coherent system which we call “a culture.” Behavior is traditional, spontaneous, uncritical, and personal; there is no legislation or habit of experiment and its reflection for intellectual ends. Kinship, its relationships and institutions, are the type categories of experience and the familial group is the unit of action. The sacred prevails over the secular; the economy is one of status rather than of the market. (Miner 1952:529, cf. Redfield 1947:294)

These folk traits are a combination of aspects observed in societies preconceived to be rural and primitive (though Redfield is hesitant to use the word “primitive” because of its obvious pejorative and evolutionary meanings), and while every aspect is not expected to be present in any part of society, those cultures who fulfill more of the criteria than others are then positioned as more folk than others. Accordingly, the conceptual opposites of these traits come to identify urban society (Redfield 1947:294). As a result, the distinction between folk and urban societies embodies the distinction between Durkheim’s mechanical and organic solidarity, as well as Tönnies’ *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (Redfield 1947:295). Mechanical solidarity stems from the similarities that people have to each other, and was thought to characterize “simpler” societies, particularly those based on kinship, while organic solidarity stresses the interdependent nature of people of different social and economic roles in industrial societies. The folk society is envisioned as an operational, fully integrated and largely homogenous whole,

though it is necessarily small so that each member might be able to recognize and interact with each other on a personal, rather than an organizational basis. While folk societies were recognized as existing alongside urban ones, they were considered separate spheres of interaction, largely closed to one another.

The form of organization that accords most accurately with the requisite traits of a folk society, then, is the rural community. Redfield and others of the Chicago school elaborated their framework through ethnological fieldwork that was located mainly in the Yucatan, Puerto Rico, and Guatemala, where small and relatively isolated rural settlements could be found to accord with the folk end of the continuum. These villages were conceived of as almost naturally occurring and constituted the organizational form of humanity throughout most of its history. The city, on the other hand, was highly organized, standardized and regulated, where the rural community almost sprung up as the logical extension of human organization. Citing de Toqueville, Redfield notes that “the village or township was ‘the only association ... so perfectly natural that wherever a number of men are collected it seems to constitute itself’” (1960:4). These little communities are described as distinct (their boundaries are definite and evident), small (enough so that one investigator can observe its extent personally), homogenous (there is little differentiation in work or in opinion) and self-sufficient (in terms of its subsistence production and its boundaries as marking the extent of the majority of human interactions for members) (Redfield 1960:5). Just as with the folk-urban continuum, Redfield notes that the traits of a little community will be apparent in different degrees, and urban influence on the rural community will result in culture change that dismantles the

homogeneity and boundedness of community, spelling out the demise of the community accompanied by conflict and an adoption of more urban forms of organization.

Redfield's conceptualization of the rural village or band as a little community brings us back to the claim that communities are centrally about wholeness, that they are entities in their own rights. Certainly, Redfield thought that the most functional and integrated communities were identified by their boundedness as wholes. The most telling and informative aspect of the little community within the folk-urban continuum for this discussion of the community concept is the dissolution of wholeness that Redfield associated with community death. Discussing the Swedish community of Kråkmarö, Redfield laments the dissolution of the integrative social structure, built around common landholding and farming, that once held community members together:

As common work decreased, the common sentiments that held the people together declined. The new pattern of settlement in scattered farms removed much of the effectiveness of the old controls by talk and example. The authority of the old over the young grew less. People began to move away from the community. Some sold their houses to city dwellers for use as summer homes. Kråkmarö is a dying village. It dies because it has ceased to be a whole. (1960:108-109)

This dissolution of the community whole, here attributed to a restructuring of land use and ownership, Redfield has in other cases attributed largely to the impact of the urban sphere onto the rural (Miner 1952:532). Regardless of the specific causes attributed to the dissolution of the community, it seems that by and large a transition from folk to urban society is seen as disruptive and entails a loss of the commonalities and romantic solidarity that the little community, and folk society more generally, are seen to inhere. The onset of modernity is the death of community.

Oscar Lewis, revisiting the community of Tepoztlán, upon which Redfield based much of his theoretical work, strongly disagrees with this conceptualization of the general course of history for folk societies:

...underlying the folk-urban dichotomy as used by Redfield, is a system of value judgements which contains the old Rousseauan notion of primitive peoples as noble savages, and the corollary that with civilization has come the fall of man... in Redfield's writings there emerges the value judgement that folk societies are good and urban societies bad... "Progress" and urbanization now are seen as inevitable, but they are still evil. (1951:435)

Horace Miner, in his defense of the folk-urban construct, attempts to set aside this and other critiques of the idea of progress as it is formulated in the folk-urban continuum. Arguing that since Kroeber critiques the folk-urban construct for favouring an "ethnocentric idea of 'progress'", and that Lewis argues Redfield instead has a folk bias, that both arguments in effect cancel each other out and that the continuum has no such bias, in either direction (Miner 1952:534-535). I side here with Lewis, who argues convincingly that the folk-urban continuum falls into an all too common anthropological tradition of romanticizing "primitive" peoples and all the while favouring an ideal of progress that posits the urban centre as the (evil, anomic, conflictual) pinnacle of civilization.

The appeal of the folk-urban continuum, and therefore the little ideal community, lies in just how well it can be seen to fit with certain pre-suppositions of what folk/rural society is supposed to look like. The model was constructed through an amalgamation of traits identified in societies already categorized as largely folk, and the concept acts as a ready-made critique of an all-too rapidly changing city that is rampant with market forces

supposedly tearing at the fabric of society, where individualism leads every person to seek their own profit at the expense of others. The values that the city does not represent are then re-cast onto a pastoral other, who then becomes the ideal object of study if we are to correct the injustices of modernity. Even critics of this type of conceptualization have fallen victim to its allure, searching for aspects of whole communities in order to prevent the abuses of modernity (see Creed 2006a:37-42).

Building on and diverging from the framework laid out by Redfield, students of the emerging field of peasant studies focused their early work on elucidating typologies and classificatory schemes that in many ways were attempts at reconciling some of the over-simplifications of the folk-urban continuum. Sydney Mintz, for example, proposed a different type of society, neither folk nor urban but borrowing from both. His plantation communities were typified by many of the characteristics that Redfield laid out for folk societies, with some important differences that were to carry forward (Mintz 1953). Importantly, where Redfield saw geographical isolation in little communities, the plantation community showed isolation in a socio-economic sense since its members had limited opportunities for class mobility. The members of such a plantation community might be largely drawn from a local, singular ethnic group, but labourers could frequently enter or leave the plantation in search of work. This ethnic heterogeneity, a hallmark of Redfield's urban society, was tempered by the class commonalities shared by community members: "while ethnic homogeneity and geographic isolation are lacking, a very real kind of cultural homogeneity, partly class determined, prevails" (Mintz 1953:140). Perhaps the most important, and lasting, contribution of Mintz's classification of the

plantation community (borrowing heavily from Redfield here) was that though membership frequently fluctuated, the “interchangeability of personnel while maintaining over-all cultural uniformity” meant that the community structure could prevail despite relatively fluid movement of people (Mintz 1953:140-141).

Others proposed similar, more detailed, typologies that broke out of the dichotomous continuum. Concentrating their efforts largely on Latin America, Charles Wagley and Marvin Harris (1955) outlined a set of subcultures that taken together might present a comprehensive view of Latin American societies. Outlining an array of groups, from Tribal and Modern Indians through to peasants, plantation tenants and urban upper, middle, and working classes, Wagley and Harris do not attempt to dislodge the primacy of the folk-urban model, but rather define the varied forms that might be found along the continuum. They agree in principal with the general idea that at a national level, societies may move towards the urban type, but the subcultures do not necessarily “merge in content” since urban society changes as well (Wagley and Harris 1955:448). Following Lewis’ criticism of Redfield’s view of homogenous whole communities, though, they concede that multiple subcultures are to be expected within any community (Wagley and Harris 1955:446).

The Closed, Corporate Peasant Community

Eric Wolf’s seminal essays of the 1950s add to this tradition of attempting to define general analytical tools that are applicable to a wide range of societies. Whereas Wagley and Harris attempted to define the range of subcultures apparent in any Latin American society, Wolf concentrated his efforts on delimiting the various organizational

and structural categories of a strictly peasant class (1955; 1957). He stipulates that peasants must, by definition, be agricultural producers with “effective control of land” (through customary rental rights, usufruct rights, or outright ownership) who cultivate largely for subsistence rather than for market based accumulation (Wolf 1955:453-454; 1957:1). This peasantry cannot be seen, according to Wolf, as sharing some overarching cultural content. Rather, the category is defined by a “structural relationship” where “the manner in which the part-culture is organizing into the larger sociocultural whole” must be examined (Wolf 1955:454-455). The primary means by which peasants are integrated into the sociocultural whole is by way of the community, so “a typology of peasants must include a typology of the kinds of communities in which they live” (Wolf 1955:455). The community, here, is not necessarily defined as a functional whole that acts to oppose modernizing influences, it is a node within the larger society that serves to integrate peasant producers to that society. Wolf chooses to focus on the structural forms of such communities, which he acknowledges are historically contingent and adaptive to changes in the “total social field of which they are a part” (1955:455; see also Wolf 1956).

Wolf identifies a variety of possible peasant community forms that differ mainly in terms of their market integration and access to land. Ranchers, plantation semi-proletariat, and frontier horticulturalists are acknowledged, but their community forms are not discussed (1955:466-468). The two types of communities treated in most detail are the “open” community and the closed, corporate peasant community that came to represent, for many, the quintessential organizational form of the peasantry in Latin

America and beyond. So-called open communities exhibit divisions in wealth and power, in general produce more for markets external to the community, lack a definite boundary, allow the free circulation of members, have little if no formal corporate structure, and are often influenced by external forces (Wolf 1955:462-463).

To the contrary, closed, corporate communities are those that are uniformly poor (with customary and structural obligations keeping members so), maintain a politico-religious order that defines an external boundary (such as a *fiesta* cargo system), produce largely for internal consumption using a traditional technology, and usually share landholding or have a taboo against the selling of land to outsiders (Wolf 1955:456-460; 1957:2-6). These traits, taken alone, evoke a romantic vision of the peasant community; a place where each individual is held responsible for their actions by the whole, where work is ideally done together and marginal profits shared by all. Eking out a living together, members of the closed, corporate peasant community might be seen to have achieved the homogenous, cooperative, and moral order that users of the community idea strive towards. Quite to the contrary, though, Wolf admits that any group relation will “involve conflict and accommodation, integration and disintegration” (1956:1066). The social structures that maintain the bounds of this type of community are simultaneously integrative and coercive, since in many cases the welfare of individuals (particularly when sharing a resource held in common) rests on the obligation of members to the whole, rather than just to themselves or to their household.

Over-arching social and economic factors, as well as the social structures and institutions that make up whole societies and communities, according to Wolf, have

created the world in which peasants and Indians live. In Latin America, the declining native populations after Spanish conquest along with a demand for labour and tribute meant that colonial authorities had to devise methods to govern and extract wealth from what were often widespread households. The result was an array of organizational forms that were largely imposed on indigenous populations, including *encomiendas*, *reducciones*, and *haciendas* that served to group households together in an easily manageable and taxable way. “The new Indian communities were given rights to land as local groups” (Wolf 1957:7), and so the “repatterned Indian community emerged as something qualitatively new: a corporate organization of a local group inhabited by peasants” (Wolf 1956:1067). The peasantry exists only in relation to the “dominant entrepreneurial sector” that it must serve, meaning peasant backwardness and homeostasis can not be seen as cultural traits, but rather as effects of the social hierarchy that have created the peasantry as a subordinate class (Wolf 1957:8). The implications of power in the formation of rural Latin American communities is an important advancement in social theory, but it contributes to a view that the real social actors are not individuals, but rather social structure. Outside of the community, extractive economies impose certain group relations, and within the community gossip, enforced reciprocity, and *costumbres* (traditions) dissuading accumulation of wealth dictate how individuals must act. While such an approach lends itself to destabilizing the myth of a benevolent community entity, it also neglects to address peasant and indigenous agency by ignoring how they may subvert, acquiesce to, or mobilize such structures to their advantage (a claim that Wolf himself later attempted to refute, see Wolf 1986).

What is to be gained from this brief discussion of the closed, corporate peasant community is that though it was proposed simply as a “conceptual model that could be used in discovery procedures,” the concept was a powerful one that framed later understandings of peasant life (Wolf 1986:325). Any community that was recognized as an Indigenous community was assumed to embody the characteristics of the closed corporate community (Keatinge 1973:39). The idea of a “veritable redoubt of cultural homeostasis,” characterized by a stalwart denial of outside influences in order to maintain a communal corporate structure resonates well with a vision of indigenous peoples as backwards and tradition bound (Wolf 1956:1067; Keatinge 1973:40). Elsie Keatinge’s presentation of the Huanchaco indigenous community in the Moche valley provides a useful revision of the open and closed peasant community types that Wolf envisioned. Though Wolf acknowledged that change from a closed to an open type community was not the inevitable course of history, and that fluctuating market integration should be reflected in changes in community structure, Keatinge takes this idea one step further by arguing that the corporate nature of the community is not necessarily dependent on its closure, that the corporate structure of a community lends itself equally well as “a means of political mobilization and integration into the wider national scene,” a sentiment that also clearly informed the social reformers in Ecuador who saw the Ley de Comunas as the avenue out of Indian backwardness and lack of integration into the modernizing state project (Wolf 1955:463; Keatinge 1973:55).

The *ayllu*, an Andean organizational form

Similar to the more general concept of community, the *ayllu* is an Andean organizational concept that is contentious, to say the least. Much like community, the *ayllu* has been studied in various contexts at differing levels of social complexity. Definitions of the term vary, though it is generally accepted that the *ayllu* is an Andean concept that conveys the idea of group similarity at different scales depending on context, so that it is not directly translatable as, say, a lineage or descent group, a community, a family, or an ethnic group, but it may reflect aspects of each of those ideas. Billie Jean Isbell, in her ethnography of southern Peruvian indigenous peasant comuneros in Chuschi, defines the term as “any group with a head,” though she chooses to discuss the *ayllu* as it pertains to the exogamous family: any person’s *ayllu* is the close group of family with whom they can not marry. This generally extends at least to a person’s grandparents, excluding first cousins from eligibility but allowing second cousins (1978:105). Tom Zuidema similarly argues that it is a “bilateral kinship network of four generations’ depth” (quoted in Salomon 1982:80). Catherine Allen discusses how the term may apply, simultaneously, to a household, to groups of households built in the same geographically determined area of a village, to factions, and to a community as a whole (for a complete discussion, see Allen 1988:95-124). As a definition, she offers that “the *ayllu* as it is manifested in Sonqo is a group of people brought together as a social, political, and religious unit through their common connection with the sacred places” (Allen 1988:108). *Ayllus* exist in a nested hierarchy, with each smaller *ayllu* being one unit, analogous to others at a similar structural level, making up the constituent

parts of an ayllu at the next higher level (Allen 1988:107). The Sonqo ayllu, and presumably ayllus in general for Allen, identify common ancestors from which all ayllu mates are descended, which at a local level might be recently dead persons, or at a provincial level may be the *apu*; deities embodied in sacred places such as the great mountains and volcanoes (Allen 1988:107-109)

For highland Peru, Catherine Allen and, more recently, Frank Salomon have shown how certain indigenous communities that maintain some ayllu form have integrated the indigenous organizational structure into the community structure favoured by the Peruvian government (see Allen 1988 and Salomon 2004). Officers of the ayllu are elected (often against their will, as these positions demand much time and are not remunerated) to local level political positions, *cargos*, whose responsibilities include maintaining order, resolving disputes, and generally integrating the production of households with the needs of the collectivity. Generally, these officers are male heads of households, though the responsibilities of the cargoes requires the participation of wives and entire families. In Saraguro, similar offices may be held by women, though it is more common for them to be occupied by men. These officers may exist alongside, or be synonymous with, elected officials of the indigenous community (as a local node of the Peruvian political hierarchy). Organizing *mingas* and *faenas* (communal labour parties) are among the most important of the duties of these officials since the maintenance of trails, irrigation canals, communal pasture lands, a central road, the local school and daycare where they exist, along with a whole other range of projects necessitate that individual households be mobilized for the benefit of the community or ayllu. These

cargos are sometimes ranked in a politico-religious hierarchy that includes feast sponsoring, resulting in an array of responsibilities that households are expected to undertake successively throughout the lifetime of membership that would, upon completion, move the household (often represented by the male head) into the position of a *mayor*, a senior member of the community whose authority and knowledge are respected in the decision making process.

Part of the problem with employing such terms as the “ayllu” in attempting to define a local idea of community, however, is that it is not clear that ayllus were ever associated with many of the same romantic meanings that are conflated with the community idea in western thought. So, while Frank Salomon acknowledges that the basic political and structural unit of polities in the Quito area under Inka rule resembled the Peruvian ayllu, there is no indication that such a term previously held the same sort of meaning that is currently attached to the ayllu as a primordial envisioned community (1986:122). Ayllus, mingas, and cargo systems feature prominently in Andean research, so no effort is made here to document them in any great detail. Communities and villages that maintain these practices are often those that are considered to be more traditional, to have maintained those pre-columbian organizational forms that are very enticing when one is searching for the closed, corporate peasant community, for the timeless “redoubt of cultural homeostasis” (Wolf 1956:1067). The desire to find such community has, in the mind of Orin Starn, led many Andean anthropologists to selectively study those locales that exhibit such structures to the detriment of other areas:

“Ethnographic visions of the perennial “otherness” of lo andino [that which is essentially and prototypically indigenous Andean] had a self-

fulfilling logic. In their desire to study “indigenous” Andean culture, anthropologists ... largely ignored the entire northern highlands of Spanish-speaking and more “acculturated” rural people. The virtual elision of northern Peru from the ethnographic record helped maintain the image of the Andean countryside as the province of ayllus and speakers of native languages, a place little changed from the ancient past. (1991:69)

The most egregious promulgators of such a vision for Starn include Billie Jean Isbell, whose account of Chuschi praises the defensive isolation of its community members in the region that soon was to become part of the heartland of Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path), the maoist revolutionary group that threw Peru into war in the 1980s and 1990s (Starn 1991:64-66). By focusing on the supposed internal homogeneity, stoic cultural defensiveness, and apparent ideal cultural-ecological fit in a marginal environment, such researchers neglected to see the crushing poverty, increasing urban migration and syncretic or ambivalent identities that were fertile ground for Sendero Luminoso (Starn 1991:76-80). For Starn, the models elaborated from, and approaches taken to, studying the Andean countryside are not faulty because they are incorrect or do not exist in reality (it is difficult to argue that there are *not* communities in existence that organize along scalar family/geographical lines called ayllus). Rather, anthropologists (along with tourists, travel writers, sympathetic mestizos, and NGOs) have simply chosen to focus on the communities that are examples of more “traditional” lifestyles, and in so doing have continuously entrenched the idea of the Andes as timeless and communal.

More recently, Mary Weismantel has argued for the necessity of anthropologists to deal with some of these ideas that we have previously cast by the wayside as they are

picked up and re-interpreted by indigenous activists often fluent in anthropology.

Weismantel writes:

For much to our horror, anthropologists discover in the rhetoric of indigenous politics a romantic vision of an unchanging Indian culture that exceeds our own worst excesses - and one that partly or perhaps mostly originates from our own texts. The ayllu is described in terms that makes us uneasy: as a survival from the ancient past, a symbol of steadfast Native resistance to change through five long centuries. While other anthropologists and historians insist on viewing the Andes through the lens of Modernity, indigenous scholars celebrate an institution they see as premodern in origins and explicitly antimodern in conception. (Weismantel 2006:80)

In this way, Luis Macas (2000) can draw upon the works of Eric Wolf to support his claim that the ayllu or *llacta* (land/community) is the integral basis of indigenous social organization, necessary to the survival of an alternative lifeway. Weismantel is attempting to portray post-modern uses of the ayllu as “predicated upon the possibility of an Indian history, past and future, that is both non-Western and antimodern,” a position that she is wary of, but supports for the greater cause of indigenous activism (2006:91). One problem with such an approach, compatible with activist anthropology, is that this envisioned ayllu, similar to how Miranda Joseph sees communities acting within modern capitalist centers, is often disciplinary rather than emancipatory, and in Saraguro, is promoted as only part of a neo-Inkaic tradition and culture of which a large number of indigenous Saraguros have reservations. Indigenous tradition and identity does not need to be anti-modern, and the dreams and aspirations of indigenous youth in Saraguro speak to the possibility of a contemporary, modern indigenous identity. To borrow the words of José Antonio Lucero,

Community and nationality can be used ... to find new ways of putting our lives together, but they can also mask injustices and inequalities. Social scientists can (and should) point out these problems not to undermine indigenous political projects but to contribute to the transformative processes that indigenous people themselves have set in motion. (2003:42)

It is in this spirit that I draw attention to the sometimes conflicting views about the nature of community and indigenous Inkaic revitalization in Saraguro. This discussion will be continued in a later chapter.

Towards an Anthropology of the Present

The anthropological interest in indigenous cultures and broadly conceived peasant studies is conflicted by this obsession with the past in the present, though the problem is not entirely of our own making, and theorists as far back as Robert Redfield and Eric Wolf have attempted to lay out frameworks that explain the presence of what can be (mis)represented as elements of the past in “modern” societies. The importance of their contributions, 60 years later, is not simply to set them up as easily deconstructed tautological arguments that serve to reinforce a western view of modernity. As William Roseberry has convincingly argued, an anthropology of the present needs an active engagement with the past, not just in terms of local history, by seeking out “connections with past anthropological generations in an attempt to construct traditions of critical, engaged work” (1995:152). If Andean anthropologists of the 1970s and 80s were guilty of placing their indigenous subjects out of time, exempt from the modernity outside of their communities, a thorough examination of the students of Robert Redfield and Julian Steward shows they should have at least been aware of the interpenetrations of market and other forces within peasant communities.

Indigenous communities in Ecuador, as in much of the Andean region, can historically be interpreted (at least partially) as products of colonial demands that necessitated easy access to Indian tribute and labour. From feudal *encomiendas* (land legally owned by its native occupants, but a portion of whose labour and products went to the Spaniard to whom it was assigned) through to *reducciones* (a product of Viceroy Toledo's late 16th century reforms that relocated indigenous tributaries into "rational," easily governed settlements), plantations, and other imposed organizational forms, the Spanish colonial government levied taxes collectively on ayllus and indigenous groups as a whole, rather than on the individual. A necessary step, then, was to organize native Andeans in easily recognizable and measurable groups. While Indian tribute was officially abolished towards the end of the 19th century, it survived in a range of forms well into the 20th century, with indigenous persons still providing the majority of public labour to the state (Larson 2004:10-11). Communal land holding was abandoned in favour of individual ownership with the liberal turn, focused mostly on opening up terrain for global market production after independence, and re-implemented from the 1930s through to the late 1960s depending on country as part of agricultural reforms (Larson 2004:12). Some communities persisted, others were newly formed and continue to form under the Ley de Comunas as they break off from other communities or are established in new areas. While earlier theorists criticized emerging modern states for the destruction of community, the Andean case suggests that states have regularly relied on indigenous community structures, and the neoliberal turn has required that centralized states rely

more heavily on these local structures, meaning that communities have increased relevance as units subordinate to the state (Creed 2006b:10).

Research Methods

This thesis deals less with the state level issues of community than with the local, mundane practices that constitute, reproduce, or bring in to question communities. The early anthropological works concerning communities focused more on the structural aspects and ideal types of organizational institutions, but the more recent discursive, agentive, practice-oriented turns in anthropology allow an approach that prioritizes the experiences of various actors as they articulate with political, social, and cultural fields at various local, regional, national, and international scales. Accordingly, while my choice of field site as the handful of indigenous communities directly surrounding the cantón capital of Saraguro is relatively well defined, the lives of individuals represented in this research often find their way well beyond this local sphere, and the linkages among indigenous groups, national governments, and international organizations require an acknowledgement of forces acting upon the local that may only be partially centered there. The opposite is also true, as ideas, relationships, and individuals transcend a Saraguro context to become embedded in other areas, as is evinced by, for example, the establishment of a Saraguro migrant organization in Valencia, Spain. In a similar vein, while this research concerns itself primarily with its Saraguro field site, it is embedded in previous research on community and indigenous social movements from elsewhere, and speaks frequently to a more general Andean context.

Because of the constituted, produced nature of communities that are embedded with a mix of sentiment, emotion, and meaning, the nature of anthropological fieldwork is well suited to explore the questions at hand. The typically long-term nature of fieldwork (in this case, from February 01 to August 08 in 2010), lasting usually at least one year or comprising a number of visits over years, is both critically and ethically important. It is important critically because it means that as the relationships between research informants and a reflexive ethnographer develop, the researcher is better positioned to be able to elicit more valuable information through their increasing knowledge of local practices, and therefore know which questions to ask, when, and how. Furthermore, it is only with experience that the ethnographer is able to contextualize any given information by considering the position of the speaker or those involved with a particular practice. An examination of the almost ubiquitous ideas of community and indigeneity necessitates the contextualization that fieldwork brings, a process that allows us to “test anthropological ideas against people’s lived reality, and to disturb one’s prejudices and bogus certainties” (MacClancy and Fuentes 2011:12). Ethically, the nature of extended fieldwork demands that the researcher be cognizant of their own impact upon the field site, and requires them to constantly evaluate their position with their host community. It also enables them to pursue research that is not only informed by the local context, but partially framed by informants themselves and therefore ideally more relevant, perhaps of more benefit, to the people themselves.



Figure 4: Linda sorts and dries the harvest of corn, favas, and beans.

The primary methods used to gather research in the field comply more or less generally to those usually associated with ethnographic participant-observation, including participation in community assemblies and work parties, celebrations and feasts, and in the more mundane activities of tending cattle and sheep in the higher pastureland, harvesting corn, beans, and garden produce, shelling and drying harvested foods, playing soccer and volleyball, as well as chatting while sharing in just about any task. While such an approach has long been the mainstay of anthropologists, particularly those attempting to study small or isolated “communities,” and though the approach is invaluable in providing deep insight into the lifeways of a very specific set of “informants,” a grounded approach requires harnessing knowledge in ways that may not be so closely associated

with participant-observation: these include both structured and informal interviews with political figures, NGO workers and directors, and people outside of the immediate field context that may speak to the issues being studied, as well as a recognition of the effects of the process of research upon the self, and the effects of the researcher on the process of research. Though participation is an integral part of the research experience,

participation in the everyday lives of people is a means of facilitating observation of particular behaviours and events and of enabling more open and meaningful discussions with informants. Without ethnographers' participation as some kind of member of the society, they might not be allowed to observe or would simply not know what to observe or how to go about it. (Davies 1998:71)

With this in mind, I sought to embed myself in the area in a way that also fulfilled what I saw as an ethical duty to provide some service or assistance in return for informants' tolerating my presence and goals. With the help of a local Saraguro social development NGO, the Kawsay Foundation, I began teaching English once weekly in three indigenous communities, which gave me the opportunity to slowly familiarize myself with the area and eventually find lodging with a family in the community of Ñamarín who operate a guest house in conjunction with the local community tourism network. When I began taking part in the bimonthly communal labour parties in Ñamarín, my presence intrigued (and confused) many people, but eventually earned me the respect of some through my sharing in the work, and meant that by the time I presented myself in a community assembly, I was at least recognizable. Along with attending feasts, playing volleyball, and visiting and working with informants, these constituted the majority of my opportunities for participant-observation. My host family, along with their extended kin, the men with whom I regularly played volleyball, the members of the *cabildo* (elected governmental

body at the community level) council, and a number of youths with whom I interacted on a regular basis formed the core network of my informants in Ñamarín. Still, regular social and other occasions provided ample opportunities to meet and interact with a wide variety of people within the community. Outside of the community, the director and employees of the Kawsay Foundation proved very amiable and open to share their opinions and knowledge, and less frequent contact with the organizers of the seasonal Inkaic festivals proved invaluable.

While I initially attempted to conduct semi-structured interviews with a wide variety of informants, most people did not open up to the intrusiveness of being directly questioned, and so I instead chose to broach general topics in more casual conversations, and reserved interviews for members of the cabildo council and those involved with local social development organizations. In total, only four such formal interviews were conducted, two with cabildo members and two with NGO professionals. No interviews were recorded based on the initial failures of attempting direct interviews more widely, though extensive notes taken during and after interviews (as well as during other occasions) provide the quoted speech reported herein, the translations being as close as possible to the original sentiments. In general, interviews were invaluable in acquiring information with regard to the nascent Inkaic cultural revitalization efforts that have emerged particularly in communities other than Ñamarín.

As part of the “ongoing interplay between theorizing and collecting data,” my general area of interest in community participation and the associated research questions were refined and shifted focus as I became more familiar with Saraguro, and I came to

see that issues of water management and access played a large role in community politics and were a main concern for individual families, hence the relative importance of water in the coming discussions (Davies 1998:31). In addition, a number of informal conversations allowed me to collect limited life history information from a handful of informants.

The chapters that follow are divided loosely by scale of analysis. The first concerns community participation and social and political issues related to the functioning of one particular indigenous community, Ñamarín, and the discussion is restricted to the local context. The following chapter situates the events of the May 2010 water protests in historical context, dealing centrally with the interaction between indigenous communities and the national state as indigenous actors negotiate their place within the nation as citizens and as members of smaller communities. The final chapter deals with the various indigenous lifeways of community members, and how an Inkaic cultural revitalization movement, informed by global discussions of indigeneity, draws on particular ideals of the indigenous community.

Chapter 2 - The indigenous community of Ñamarín

Immediately surrounding the town of Saraguro are a handful of indigenous communities that range in size. In local opinion each community has a bit of its own character, and distinctions in wealth and “tradition” can be found between and within each. Descending Northeast into the valley below Saraguro, the Panamerican highway winds its way past the iconic *choclo* statue that commemorates the importance of corn in the region. Choclos are ripe, fresh corn cobs that are something of a delicacy since they are only available for a few weeks from April to June before the stalks and grains begin to dry. Just prior to harvest in these months, the choclo statue seems almost redundant since it sits just above a panorama of the valley where houses are interspersed between and almost overtaken by the scattered plots of tall green stalks, whose little purple flowers provide a bit of contrasting colour to the dominant green in what can be very wet months. Corn here is grown everywhere, and the backyard plots of the town itself gradually extend into small fields, usually a couple dozen meters in length and much fewer in width, that cut the landscape into strips of alternating grazing land and agricultural terrain. Stalks of corn rise tenaciously mere steps from well worn dirt trails, and along the highway larger plots are dusted generously by the many busses, transport trucks, and other vehicles that pass through the region headed towards more populated areas. Further down the curving road are a handful of bare cement block or adobe houses and a dominating newer-looking gas station leads down to a sort of wholesale tienda, where crates of beer are plied high under a blue tarp. Here, houses begin to take advantage of the more open landscape and sit farther back from the road itself, until a

sharp curve in the highway signals an upcoming bridge where it crosses a stream of the Paquishapa river flowing down from Gunudel and Las Lagunas, two indigenous communities with fertile land due to their favourable location in the valley.

At this point the edge of a ridge rises sharply up to higher pastureland that extends northward from a large group of mountains that form the southern ridge of the canton. The *Baño del Inka*, a small waterfall, has carved itself into this ridge and joins the river at the highway. According to local tourist brochures, this waterfall was an Inka holy site, or *huaca*, where the Inka rulers would stop and purify themselves when journeying through the region. Today, a trail leads up to the small cave formations around the waterfall itself, which are often used as a ceremonial site for self-proclaimed shamans who provide purification ceremonies to tourists, and who often lead the Inti Raymi (Inkaic festival of the sun, held on the June solstice) celebrations³. It is also a party site for some local youth. Just below the waterfall itself a smaller paved road leads up to ridge that sits between the valley and the higher plateau, and a sign proclaims the entrance to Ñamarín.

³ Such ceremonies are often held for tourists through the local community tourism network and tourism operator. The ceremonies themselves are usually performed by local Saraguro NGO professionals working within a framework of Inkaic cultural revitalization who, in these contexts, may refer to themselves as Shamans. Their identification as such is, however, questioned by many who do not align themselves with this movement. A number of folk healers do operate somewhat clandestinely in the area, though their identities are not known to the author.



Figure 5: The Community of Ñamarín.

Ñamarín is a relatively small community compared to Oñakapak or Lagunas, with about 75 active households. Most of the houses are nucleated around the center of the ridge on which the community sits, but others are scattered along the highway or on the steeper forested incline leading up to the high pasturelands. Each house generally has a small amount of arable land immediately adjacent to it, but a household's total land will likely be spread between different elevations and areas. The houses themselves are varied and tell of a diversity in wealth. Older U-shaped adobe houses, with small or no windows and coloured by years of cooking fires are maintained alongside newer breeze block cement structures or brick houses with large, tinted windows. Strangely enough, a handful of the new, larger houses sit empty, their financiers living and working in Spain

or the United States and having these houses built in what has elsewhere been described as conspicuous consumption (Collaredo-Mansfeld 1994:845-865).

Other elaborate homes have been funded by the occupants' children through remittances, and still others are simply indicative of the growing number of well educated professional Saraguros who live and work in the region. Most of these new homes are built by hired workers and contractors, rather than the communal labour parties that could have been assembled in decades past to make house building an activity shared between family, friends, clients and patrons (Pribilsky 2007:108-110). A few other homes sit empty and boarded up, their previous occupants having migrated relatively permanently to the city or the oriente, where quite a large number of ethnic Saraguros have bought land over the last century. Some families even spread their time between the Saraguro area and Yacuambi, the now largely Saraguro region in the warmer climate to the east. Lining the paths, road, and small corn plots, deep green grass is cut short by women and children to feed their *cuyes* (guinea pigs, a typical Andean delicacy) and the occasional rabbit.

The main road that passes through Ñamarín is, curiously, asphalt paved and in relatively good condition; quite a strange sight since most communities in the area have an uneven gravel or dirt road that gets pitted from use in muddy weather. The stories that are told about that road speak to the often patchwork, negotiated nature of infrastructure in such communities. Less than a decade ago, the main road in Ñamarín was dirt, but a deal was struck with the company who was doing the paving on the newly expanded Panamerican highway. Because the highway winds around lands belonging to those in the

community, the trade-off was that the company was also to pave the main road through Ñamarín. Apparently, when the work was nearing completion, the company attempted to pull their equipment out in the middle of the night and neglect the agreement. One of their workers was hired from Ñamarín, a low level hand who got wind of the plot and stole one of the paving machines. Weaving back and forth along the highway, he managed to bring the machine to the community, where it was held until the company did pave the road.

Such a story is reminiscent of the long history of corruption, fractured agreements, and extra-legal measures that members of indigenous communities must on occasion confront. This chapter examines how members of one particular Saraguro community, Ñamarín, attempt to deal with the various problems that indigenous communities face in the day-to-day: interacting with various levels of government, establishing some consensus on a particular decision affecting the members of the community as a whole, resolving disputes, and the continuous work that goes into maintaining the system of tubes and canals that bring water to the community. The first part of the chapter details the town hall style meetings, *assembleas comunales*, where community members gather to discuss issues, air grievances, and make decisions, while the second half deals with the communal labour parties and the principal of participation.

The word used in Saraguro for the form of communal labour, or mutual aid, organized at the community level for the benefit of constituent comuneros as a group is called a *minga*. This is only one of a variety of forms of mutual aid or labour tax that have been identified for the Andean region. In Peru, similar practices are generally

termed *faena* or *phayna*. In the southern Andes, the Quechua term *mink'a* is used to describe an asymmetrical labour exchange, as in patron-client or *compradrazgo* relationships where one party obviously gives more than they receive, often to secure a favour later on or maintain a relationship (Trawick 2003:197).

A range of other practices are typically discussed in association, ranging from the concept of *ayni* (mutual aid between neighbours or kin that is reciprocal and non-exploitative) through to the *mit'a* (labour tribute, in the colonial period and until the late 19th century in Ecuador non-hacienda Indians were required to offer a number of days per year of work in mines or public works to the State), considered an exploitative and non-reciprocal practice. The labour of hacienda peons and indebted *huasipungueros*, who received a small subsistence plot and usufruct pasture and water rights in exchange for work on a hacienda, was expropriated by landowners, in some cases sparing indigenous labourers from the most onerous public service labour (Larson 2004:110). In contemporary highland Ecuador, it is not uncommon for certain building materials for a designated rural project to be supplied by the state or municipality, while the labour is expected to come from *mingueros* (communal labourers), their work in a way continuing to be co-opted by the state (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999:57-58). In Ñamarín, participation in *minga* labour is both a responsibility and an ideal of behaviour, contributing to the well being of the community.

Community assemblies and fragmented consensus

Once a month, Ñamarín comuneros congregate in the *casa comunal* (town hall/communal house) to discuss matters important to the collective whole or to groups and

voluntary organizations working within the community, resolve any disputes that involve large sections of the community, and to air any particular issue of interest. These meetings are planned and organized by the elected cabildo, made up of a President, Vice-President, Secretary and/or Treasurer. Each cabildo position is a two year term (previously and more commonly a one year term), and the members of the cabildo are expected to work together to do the organizational and governmental work required within the community. Their duties include organizing and running the monthly meetings, planning and coordinating biweekly mingas, putting on a yearly *barrio* (neighbourhood) festival in August, resolving minor disputes that involve groups within the community, and generally acting as representatives of the community as a political body between comuneros and the branches of government involved in the community (the local school is part of a canton wide bilingual education network responsible to the province, the daycare is run under the *Instituto Nacional de la Niñez y la Familia* [INFA, National Institute of Childhood and Families], and there is also a small clinic staffed by a young Loja doctor doing her required rural practicum as well as an auxiliary nurse from Ñamarín, and the cabildo often acts as a go-between for the municipality of Saraguro, which receives urban-scale taxes from the 6 indigenous communities closest to the town - Ñamarín, Gunudel, Gulacpamba, Las Lagunas, Illincho, and Quisquinchir).

As has been commonly noted in the Andes, cabildo positions are not always desirable as they require time, effort, and no small amount of personal funds since they are not paid positions (see, for example, Salomon 2004; Trawick 2003). As an incentive, those who complete a term serving on the cabildo are exempt from participating in

community mingas for two years. Cabildo positions are not integrated with the cargo duties of hosting the various Catholic feasts, though in other areas of Latin America the two responsibilities (of governing and of hosting feasts) are part of the same civil-religious hierarchy of offices through which any heads of household would be expected to pass during their lifetimes, eventually fulfilling their duties and becoming *mayores*, or semi-retired “elder.” Elders are those that have completed the requisite number of feast sponsorships and turns in office, and while are therefore exempt from any duties of leadership, their experience and age means that their voices are often most respected with regards to community matters (Bastien 1978:62). While in many areas cabildo positions and feast sponsorships are nominally male positions, they often require the services of entire households, and in Saraguro positions are not restricted to men, though they are more likely to sit on the cabildo council. Both men and women are respected as *mayores*.

The stage for the monthly meetings, the *casa comunal*, is an absolutely monumental three and a half story cement block building, whose half-painted exterior walls and mostly empty, but barred, window frames serve to illustrate, like the main road itself, the sometimes curious situations by which indigenous communities are able to build infrastructure. Around the same time as the Panamerican was expanded and initially paved in the area, a gravel mining company had set up on the lower reaches of land belonging to those in the community, just above the ravine through which the river flows. According to various stories told by *comuneros*, the mining operations eroded the land to such an extent that one family lost a large portion of their fields. As part of an agreement with the community, and as repayment for the lost land, the mining company offered to

provide the materials for the current casa comunal. The family who lost their land, in return, now runs a small tienda on the bottom floor of the building, offering a wide variety of household essentials and treats. The entire second floor, as well as much of the exterior, remains unfinished, though more recently the mining company had offered to provide the necessary funds to complete the project in return for being allowed to resume their operations. A delegation from the community was sent to negotiate a deal, and to the disappointment of some, decided that it was not in the community's benefit to allow the company to continue. Consequently, the company's few remaining machines sit unused and rusting, perched along the highway just above the river. Similar occurrences seem to be relatively common in rural Ecuador, where funding is secured, communal labour organized, funds are exceeded, curtailed, or eventually withdrawn, and large projects such as the casa comunal sit ever unfinished, though fully in use.

Meetings take place on Saturday nights, usually beginning mid-evening and often lasting a few hours, sometimes well into the night. Climbing the stairs to the third floor, reserved for community assemblies, the branches of rebar hook up out of tiled but unfinished steps where railings might one day stand. The open room is painted in a dull yellow that when lit by the golden light from buzzing incandescent bulbs gives the whole space an aged look that deceives the building's recent construction. At the far end of the room a large wooden desk separates the cabildo members from the rest of the comuneros, who sit in twin rows of long pew-like benches. Others lean against the walls, huddling in their woolen caps or black felt hats, their chins tucked into heavy woolen

ponchos to protect against the nighttime chill, and yet others mingle in the back near the stairs, non-committal.

Both men and women take part in these meetings, with many women providing a certain disciplinary role through hushed, but all too audible, criticism or laughter with a friend or family member whenever a proposal is ill-thought or simply not in their interest. Women are also able to sit on the cabildo council (for the 2010-2011 cabildo, the president and vice president were men, the secretary's position was occupied by a woman, though women have previously served as president) and voice their opinions as community members, with the most deference paid to senior men and women, addressed respectfully with the honorifics *tayta* (father) and *mama* (mother). Assemblies proceed according to a pre-set agenda decided upon by the cabildo and read aloud at the commencement, with additional points of discussion added as necessary at the end of the meeting. Discussion is very deferential to the president and to those present, with a speaking turn prefaced by a statement of greeting and of gratitude.

One such assembly serves to illustrate just how these community meetings establish a certain consensus among members. Because of the direct involvement of, ideally, one member of each household, this type of assembly may be considered democratic, though as with most politics a resolution does not often satisfy the whole or even a great majority. On this particular evening in April, the assembly had been accidentally scheduled at the same time as another meeting of the social security cooperative that includes members from the four communities surrounding the *páramo* (high grasslands) pasturelands of which Ñamarín is a part. Reynaldo, an outspoken and

sometimes aloof veterinarian, stood up after the reading of the agenda to apologize for the confusion, and proposed that since everyone was present anyway he could quickly talk about establishing a new cooperative strictly in Ñamarín. The cabildo president, Tayta Rodrigo, thanked Reynaldo and indicated that since the topic didn't involve everyone and wasn't on the agenda, he could take time after the meeting. Unsatisfied, Reynaldo pressed, repeating that it wouldn't take long. The hushed voices of those in attendance rose as each person turned to those around them and discussed or joked, until finally one woman stood and offered that they just let him speak so the meeting could move along. So it is with almost any topic in these assemblies: proposals are met with quiet discussion, counter proposals, and eventual frustration can lead to either consensus or deferment of the discussion until another day, or until more information can be gained.

The next issue, this time brought up by the Vice-President Javier, was the piles of dirt, trash, and building supplies that had been accumulating on the main road. Only a few weeks prior a minga had been called to clear the road of debris, but additional piles of sand, dirt, and stone soon replaced the old ones. Another minga was proposed, and met with a range of complaints. Hesitantly, a couple of men admitted to having materials blocking part of the road, and each offered an excuse: they had no way to move it, the materials were needed for an ongoing project, or so-and-so had offered to help move the debris with their truck but never came through. Others complained that if there was a minga, then what would the community do with all the collected building materials? If it were collected as part of a minga, was it common property that any member could claim use of, did it belong to the cabildo, or was this a sort of theft? Tayta Rodrigo rose above

the clamour, insisting that if they didn't have a minga, then it was little likely that the obstructions would ever be moved. After further discussion Tayta Rodrigo put his foot down, planning the minga for the following Saturday. It was agreed that those with building materials on the road would have to take part if they wanted to keep their items, otherwise anyone could claim them.

Towards the end of the night, the agenda broached a usual topic of contention in Ñamarín: volleyball. Maria, the widowed nurse at the health post, whose large, ornate house sits just opposite the casa comunal complained that the teens playing volleyball on the road in front of the casa comunal (there is no volleyball court in Ñamarín, a net is set up nightly, strung from the casa comunal across to the health post) were playing recklessly. According to her, the kids were careless and often broke roof tiles when they would send a ball flying, or they would leave the lights on too late at night or forget to turn them off, costing everybody money. Younger boys and men usually play volleyball once the sun sets, after the men of established households have played. The school does have a cement court, but it is used for soccer. Someone proposed, half joking, that the community use the building materials left on the road to build a new volleyball court.

A couple of times a year, I am told, there is a discussion of where and how to build an actual court, but so far there has been no resolution to the issue. The most obvious, and favourable to many, place to build the court would be at the school, just below the soccer field. Unfortunately, that space is currently used as a garden, and the director of the school has made himself clear that he does not want to give it up. Though the school is funded by the government and features a curriculum designed by the

provincial ministry responsible for bilingual education, members of the community (in conjunction with local and Spanish NGOs) take responsibility for its upkeep and amelioration, and so defer to the teachers and parents' organization on issues related directly to the school. Aside from the difficulties raised by finding a suitable space for a dedicated volleyball court and financing the construction, the group of men who play regularly do not want to give up their current location, for reasons that will become apparent in the next section.

Many people weighed in on this hotly debated topic. One regular volleyball player offered that the fence surrounding the health post could be extended upwards with poles and chicken wire, but even that suggestion was met with opposition from those who felt that it would diminish the aesthetic of the center of the community or that it would not stop balls from breaking tiles on Mama Carmen's nearby house. Another proposal was that each volleyball player should bring a roof tile each time they break one, but that was not satisfactory since Mama Carmen, in particular, was not able to replace the tiles on her house herself. Meanwhile, Reynaldo suggested that the real issue was that the boys didn't know how to play "técnicamente" (technically), so the solution was to teach them how to play better. From the back of the room, Linder, who according to himself knows how to play technically (so technically in fact that he never plays in the community, only at the *feria libre* [market] on Sundays, since it would unbalance any team), said that most often it's not that they don't know how to play, but the desperation in trying to save a point can lead them to be a little over-enthusiastic and send the ball flying. Linder said that he had to learn how to play once as well, and it was at about the same age as these

boys. With that, the issue was left largely unresolved, though some of the regular players offered to have a small workshop to teach some skills to their younger counterparts.

At a time when many local Saraguro NGO professionals, neo-indigenists attempting to resurrect a nobler Inkaic past, and community members alike are lamenting the loss of the comunal tradition that they see as once having pervaded the Saraguro lifeway, the direct democracy of community assemblies stands out as a testament to the capacity of these communities to survive and continue to resolve, however partially, the conflicts, new and old, that they face. For every farmer complaining that he can no longer depend on his neighbours to help him plow, for every parent lamenting the indifference of their children to a humble, indigenous lifestyle, there is also a public forum where those same parents can come together to discuss and attempt to resolve the adolescent alcoholism or general apathy of their kids, and there are mingas when comuneros, at times begrudgingly, put in the very real labour that supports all members of the community. I do not wish to romanticize the essence of the community as one of wholeness and equality, but I also do not agree that some spirit of mutual aid, of complicity, has been completely lost (assuming, of course, that it ever existed). Through the frequent practices of communal labour, participation in voluntary organizations, and public debate in regular meetings, Ñamarín residents produce the outcome of community simultaneously as some members mourn its demise.

Volleyball and the impact of community assemblies

The discussion over volleyball provides an opportunity to measure the possible impact of community assemblies in a relatively immediate way. Organizing mingas,

providing information on land titling or various voluntary organizations, and enforcing minga and assembly participation are all fairly straightforward administrative tasks that, in Ñamarín, are by and large debated democratically in the monthly meetings. Issues such as volleyball, littering, and drinking, though, are some of the more social aspects of popular governance in this indigenous community. These debates speak more to the social, emotional notions of communities since they are not only political/administrative categories, but are also locales to which people attach significance and actively attempt to structure in a way that conforms to their ideals.

Drinking, in particular, is a contentious topic that divides opinions and is a source of worry for many, such as the small but significant number of Evangelical families who abstain from drinking. Alcohol maintains a central place in Catholic feasts, and rounds of shared drinks provide a very social aspect to many gatherings, but the prevalence of youth alcoholism and the economic pressure that husbands who are heavy drinkers put on their families are sources of worry. Thus the attempts, in recent months, of some morally concerned comuneros to ban the sale of beer and trago from the tiendas in the community. Older farmers and herders, lifelong habitual drinkers, are the first to grumble at such proposals, but say very little in response, knowing that their habits are less likely to be questioned. Still, a lifetime of alcohol consumption took its toll on more than one Tayta during my brief stay in Ñamarín. So just what is the power of the community assembly, of the decisions made in regard to the social regulation of its members? In order to trace the impact in this one area, a description of the place of volleyball in the community is necessary.



Figure 6: Men play volleyball outside of the *casa comunal*.

The type of volleyball enjoyed in large parts of Ecuador (usually called Ecuavoley, or more commonly in Saraguro, boley) is played with a heavier ball than in North America, usually a soccer ball; teams are composed of three rather than six players, and the net is generally high so that “spiking” is not feasible or allowed. These features combine to make the game one of technique, positioning, and teamwork. Rectangular courts do not divide easily into three, meaning that each team member has to move to cover areas opened up by the movement of another, and a lack of coordination leads to more points scored against than anything else. In Ñamarín, as elsewhere in Saraguro, boley is a man’s game - women and most youth are more likely to play soccer - and in Ñamarín the core group of players are middle aged men with established households and

families. Part of the reason for this is that betting is an essential aspect of the game. Unlike other forms of betting, the audience doesn't usually participate, though a friend or family member might offer up part of the stake for one team or the other. During the week, each player is expected to wager anything from 50 cents to two dollars per match, though on Sundays the stakes go can go up to as high as five or ten dollars a head.

Since there is no dedicated boley court in Ñamarín, the men have painted yellow lines on the asphalt road directly outside of the casa comunal, where a row of bricks juts out from the fence of the health post to act as a bench. The tienda in the casa comunal sits at the center line of the makeshift court, and during games passersby are forced to skirt the narrow edge of the road to avoid the court itself. Play stops regularly for passing animals, vehicles, and always for the mayores who are not expected to wait for the end of a rally. Played almost every evening, boley is a popular diversion for many people in Ñamarín, even those who do not play often sit to watch and converse or stop by for a few minutes on their way home or to their fields. This is one of the reasons boley players aren't keen on actually having a dedicated court, since it would move the sport away from the center of the community, spatially and metaphorically. The men who play usually try to team up with their friends and those with whom they play regularly, though tensions can be very high since money is on the line.

The time in between matches is filled with, and extended by, often heated debates about how much money will be bet and on the make up of each team, since no one bets when they know the teams are uneven. Some people need convincing or cajoling, and at times finding someone to referee is even more difficult than getting the players to show

their wagers before the beginning of a match. Referees take more abuse than anyone, and a string of debated calls can end in an argument and eventual withdrawal of one of the teams. It is in this very social, though not always civil, context that the debates from the community assembly were played out the day following the assembly.

Between the regular cries of “¡Alza chucha!” (Set it, cunt!), “Coje bien... puta verga, ¿no cojistes? Yo tampoco cojí, jeje” (Get it good... fuck, you didn’t get it? Me neither, haha), or “¿hoy no tomaste tu jugo de babaco?” (Didn’t you drink your babaco juice today?), a new joke had emerged from the previous night’s discussion. While the men were setting up the net in the early afternoon, Linder was leaning outside of the tienda, chewing on an *empanada*. One of the regular players invited him to play. Smiling, Linder responded by saying he plays far too technically for them. That set off a round of laughter, after which any time someone missed a play or put the ball in to the net, an onlooker would call out “¡Juega mas técnicamente!” (Play more technically!).

This joke was in many ways a public voicing of contestation against what these men saw as a slight against them. In no way do the boley players attempt to send balls into the health post or break roof tiles, though none of the regular players had voiced a defense the previous night. That day, the men were keen to defend the space they make for themselves every evening against all possible criticism by jokingly dismissing the whole affair. Still, that entire week, not a single ball was sent flying into a yard or house, and the net was promptly taken down at nightfall without a word as a discreet, yet obvious message to the younger men that they were not to play that week. A workshop was never held, though the men did for a while coach the youngsters more than usual.

There was never any complete consensus agreed upon in the assembly, but the jokes told the next day spoke to an overwhelming self-consciousness that these men had perhaps overstepped their right to play by impacting other community members. Their attempts at overtly saving face, while silently acknowledging the validity of criticism, indicate a certain moral power derived from the democratic nature of community assemblies. Especially when dealing with social issues, rather than administrative or political ones, the lack of consensus among community members is sometimes tempered by individual compromise and unwillingness to ruffle too many feathers of the people, often extended family, with whom comuneros have to live and interact.

Water and the commons in the Andes

Steady access to water for household use and irrigation is a regularly contentious issue in Ñamarín, especially in drier months when houses must limit their water use to ensure that an adequate amount of the resource remains in the system. Community assemblies regularly feature interfamily disputes over access to water, and some of the largest mingas organized throughout the year are tasked with cleaning, maintaining, and repairing the network of tubes and canals that bring water into the community itself. Ñamarín, along with 5 other nearby communities, draws its water from springs in the southern mountains of the valley, located about seven kilometers from Ñamarín itself. The patchwork network had been expanded and ameliorated in the past half century, though the irrigation canals are said to date back at least a century. Even some of the oldest campesinos claim that they don't know when the canals still in use were originally built.

The two springs from which water is currently drawn are Uritusinka and Nivel, both located in the heavily forested southern mountains of the canton, though in the 1970s a Misión Andina Ecuatoriana project helped to set up the first tubed water to the community that drew from a smaller source at Wilimon, much closer to the community. The Wilimon source, just above the Baño del Inka waterfall, is now largely unused since it sits surrounded by pastureland and isn't well filtered. A cement tank at Uritusinka flows into a long system of tubes that was constructed with the aid of a Plan Internacional project in the early 1990s, providing water to houses in Ñamarín and feeding two small reservoirs that allow for pressured sprinkler irrigation used in the small scattered greenhouses found in the community. Below these reservoirs, the tubed water system branches off to feed four smaller holding tanks that separate Ñamarín into smaller sectors of water use - Tiltil, Manzana, Kakaloma, and Wizholoma.

The irrigation canals, used to funnel water to pasture and also to lower agricultural fields, carve their way from the Nivel source through land still owned by families in Ñamarín to find their way down to the community itself. Each of the communities in the area draws its water from a different source, but because land in the páramo is variously owned by people living in Tambopamba, Oñakapak, and Lagunas as well, the members of Ñamarín are sometimes responsible for the upkeep of the canals that feed the high pastures of others, the other communities having their own canals to worry about. Disputes over water, as well as any irregularities or immediately pressing issues fall on the shoulders of the elected cabildo council, who may deal with whatever problems arise by bringing them up for discussion in an assembly, or may call together a

small group of volunteers to work an extra minga day in order to more quickly repair a damaged tube or canal. Being such an important resource, ensuring access to water is perhaps the most important aspect of community participation: maintenance of the system requires the continuous work of every family, and the resulting communal labour parties are certainly among the most regular occasions when members of the community as a whole come together to achieve a common goal.

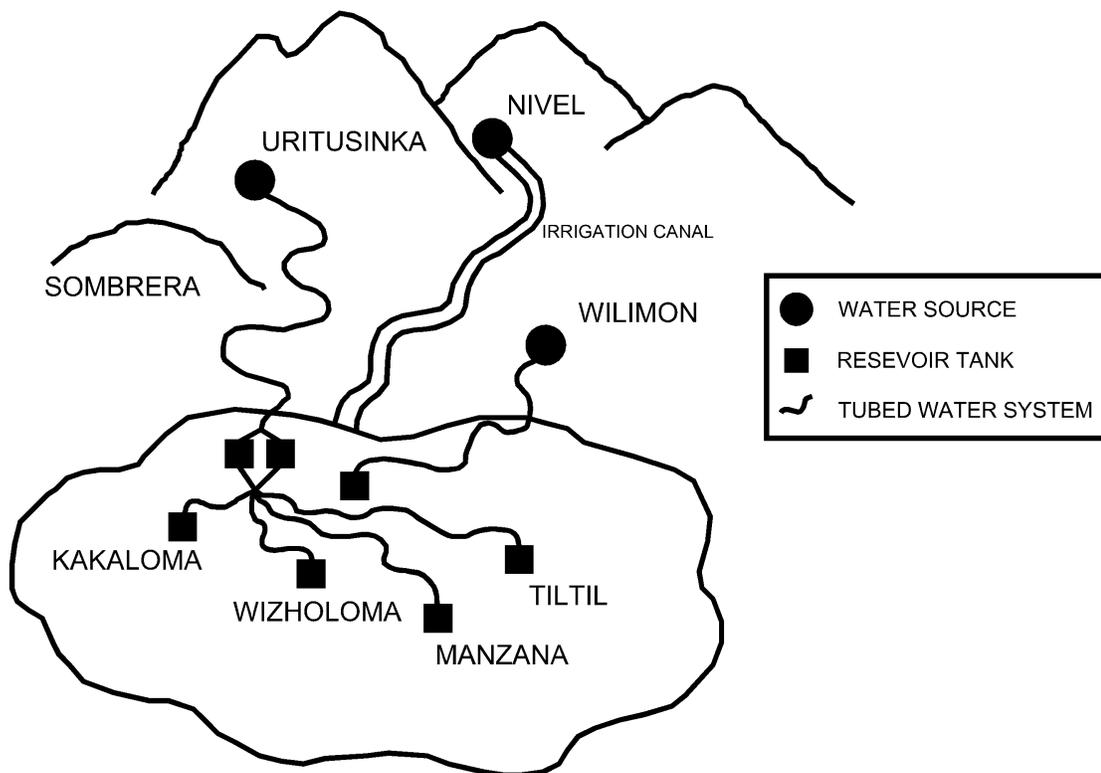


Figure 7: An approximation of the water system in Ñamarín. Map by Brett Freeman.

Irrigation systems in the Andean and Peruvian North Coast regions have been dated as far back as 5400 years, making previously arid areas, like the wide coastal valleys, accessible to human occupation and agriculture (Dillehay et al. 2005:17244). Previously, theorists maintained, following the hydraulic hypothesis of Wittfogel and

Steward, that the “managerial requirements” of the complex systems of canals that were necessary for widespread irrigation and an increasing population would have required an increasingly complex political system, eventually leading to the formation of state level organization (Billman 2002:372). The substantial amounts of labour required to build large-scale canal systems, in other words, would have required a hierarchical framework within which to extract labour through tribute and organize subsequent building projects:

A large quantity of water can be channeled and kept within bounds only by the use of mass labor, and this mass labor must be coordinated, disciplined, and led. Thus a number of farmers eager to conquer arid lowlands and plains are forced to invoke organizational devices which - on the basis of premachine technology - offer the one chance of success: they must work in cooperation with their fellows and subordinate themselves to a directing authority. (Wittfogel 1957:18, quoted in Billman 2002:373)

This analysis carried particular weight on the North Coast of Peru, where wide arid valleys provide land unsuitable for agriculture unless they are connected to a permanent water source, often in the Andean foothills, and where the great pre-Inkaic Moche and Chimú states emerged. Subsequent studies have shown, however, that large scale irrigation systems do not necessarily depend upon state control, and historical and ethnographic evidence suggests that one of the most common practices of water system management in the area is largely autonomous, segmentary organization that does not necessitate, though may include, some centralized oversight where states are concerned (Hayashida 2006:258; Mitchell 1975; Netherly 1984). Accounts of these systems resemble the contemporary practices in Ñamarín, where each community, village, ayllu, or *parcialidad* controls a segment of the whole system, which they are responsible for maintaining and from which they receive direct benefit. Community membership, indeed,

can be framed as those households who benefit from the community's water system and actively contribute labour towards its maintenance.

In many cases, commonly held resources (such as land, water, fish, or forests in different areas) receive academic scrutiny as part of the rolling out of the developmental sector, interested in the sustainable use of increasingly scarce resources along with a push for ecological sustainability. For some, the existence of "indigenous" systems of common resource management, typified in this case by access to local water sources, maintenance of irrigation canals built by previous generations, and traditional organizational structures, provides an alternative to centralized or market oriented property rights. Others have theorized around the possible dangers of common resources. Garrett Hardin, in particular, has outlined this in what he has called the "Tragedy of the Commons": a resource, such as land, is determined to be an indivisible property, so that each person has a communal right to its use. Each user, keen to maximize their own advantage, will use the property to a degree that damages it, since the deviant individual gains all of the profit for doing so, but the damage is spread out among each user so that the gain outweighs the cost to the individual. As a result, common properties are doomed to failure unless "coercive" measures are imposed to ensure the cost of abuse is greater than the possible profits for cheating the system (Hardin 1968:1247). The coercive measures include either centralized state oversight, or free-market property rights. Part of the problem with this analysis, aside from the obvious social Darwinian emphasis on individual gain, is that Hardin neglects to consider that, particularly in the case of Andean irrigation systems, while there may be no central authority overseeing the entirety of a canal system, each

community has within it rules for use of the common resource, along with sanctions for theft or overuse and a local level authority entrusted with distribution, regulation, and arbitration (Ostrom 1990:15-23).

While, as Paul Trawick has shown for southern Peru, these systems are by no means perfect solutions, the maintenance of local community organizational structures along with local oversight of irrigation systems can go a long way towards reducing overuse and theft (Trawick 2001a; Trawick 2001b; Trawick 2003). Trawick emphasizes the relationship between communal social structure and water management, and the Huaynacotas case provides a cautionary tale to those wishing to overhaul common property regimes. Following the 1969 Peruvian land reforms, the continued encroachment of Spanish *hacendados* and other wealthy landowners, who now had legal rights to more water, led to a breakdown in the system of mutual obligation that had previously governed the distribution of the increasingly scarce water supply. Government oversight had increased the possibilities of corruption through favouritism, since

water distributors were no longer village leaders and community servants, but rather technicians who were employees of the state ... Increasingly, water allocation had become a kind of free-for-all struggle - now a highly bureaucratized one, rather than a cooperative effort - a slowly unfolding tragedy. This occurred because there were now tangible rewards - systemic ones - for resorting to illicit means of getting more of the resource. (Trawick 2003:197)

In Huaynacotas, the Tragedy of the Commons stemmed not from some natural human incompatibility with common property regimes, but from a centralized state's attempt to regulate local access to this integral resource. Further, Trawick laments, the decline in communal labour that accompanied the increasingly sparse access to water, along with

increasing mestizaje and outmigration has led, eventually, to the decline and even death of the previously “indigenous” community. Though Trawick could be criticized for pursuing “lo Andino” (the essentialist view of traditional, timeless Andean indigenous practices), many comuneros in Saraguro also believe that declining minga participation, youth who do not wish to farm or herd, and increased mestizaje is leading not only to a change in what it means for them to be indigenous, but also to a decline in the community itself.



Figure 8: The *páramo* of Ñamarín, looking South towards Uritusinka.

That being said, in Ñamarín, water is perhaps the most evident area of communal interest. While canal maintenance and decisions relating to the extension or upkeep of tubed water do stem from a central body at the head of the community, there are no water

turns, as is common in the drier, higher areas of the central and southern Andes. Still, the claim that many Andean indigenous and *campesino* (peasant) communities are largely formed around the regulation of water holds merit. What sets much of the Saraguro region apart from other areas in the Andes is that water is generally not scarce, and indigenous campesinos have not been subjected to large scale expropriation of lands by outsiders. Of course, even having maintained their land base, successive generations of inheritance split between all children and a decreasing relative market value of agricultural products mean that there is generally not enough land in any one family in order for full agricultural and pastoral subsistence. It should be stated here that in order to be legalized as a *Comunidad Indígena*, a community must have some land held in common, though in Ñamarín that land consists of a largely unused hilltop stand of pine trees at Sombrera. As such, water is the one resource needed by all and held in common in the region.

Mingas and participation

Mingas are organized and led by the cabildo council, and regularly occur in Ñamarín every two weeks unless a major feast is being held. People tend to complain whenever mingas are planned any more frequently than that, and show their discontent with non-participation. Mingas serve a variety of purposes, all of which, ideally, serve the interest of everyone in the community rather than only a portion. Tasks such as trail and canal maintenance, cleaning water reservoirs or repairing/renovating parts of the water system, cleaning the main road, and performing general upkeep of the school or casa comunal are all tasks that can be completed through mingas. Once a year after the last of

the corn harvest in June the irrigation canals have to be cleared in preparation for the drier months leading up to planting, which happens in October. Taking two or three mingas to complete, this is perhaps the largest regular minga task and quite a number of people are required. Many families choose to send two or three members in order to complete their yearly obligation to the community. Minga participation is counted by household, but by volunteering extra hands or the use of a track animal or chainsaw when needed, families can pick and choose which mingas they want to attend throughout the year.

The secretary of the cabildo is responsible to take the names of minga participants at the end of the day, while the president leads and directs the works. The president's role is a very visible one, since mingueros engage in hard labour side by side it is expected that the leader of the minga work just as hard as everyone else, and in some cases much harder. I participated in a handful of mingas in Ñamarín, but it was during the canal clearing mingas of 2010 that some of the complexities and grievances associated with this type of participation were illustrated most clearly.

Saturday morning, at eight a.m. when a minga has been called, workers are expected to meet at the casa comunal equipped with a lunch and a tool appropriate for the job. On one such morning, the second and hopefully final day of canal maintenance, Tayta Rodrigo blew his *quipa* (a hollow bull's horn indicative of the office of president) impatiently since only a handful of mayores had so far assembled. The feeble sound that was produced hardly resonated off the wall of the casa comunal, and laughing, he passed the quipa off to a middle aged man, Felipe, to see if he could do any better. After a few

tries by different men, Tayta Rodrigo was able to blow loud enough that he was satisfied, and went back to waiting. By quarter after eight, he had had enough, and called those present to set off to where two weeks before they had ended the previous minga. The group set off up the various trails through the woods just above the community to where they meet the wider path that leads up to the páramo. Those individuals with cattle or much agricultural land daily climb and descend that winding path that eventually crests the top of the long ridge where most of the lands of those in the community are located. The path levels out and leads through a large, open, rolling area that has been cleared for use as pasture or is planted with corn and beans that ripen later in the year than plots lower down, spreading the work associated with the harvest over weeks, and extending the time that fresh corn is available. The trail continues south, winding around or atop rolling hills covered in thick underbrush or stands of trees that look over cleared depressions, towards the mountains and the sources of water for Ñamarín, where thick forest still dominates.

Just entering the páramo from below, a small group of workers stopped to wait for the others. Felipe, a regular attendee (since he lives alone, being separated from his wife and his children having established their own houses), turned to a young woman and complained that it is always the same people in each minga. There are those, like him, who regularly and punctually attend, while the majority just show up whenever they feel. Jenny echoed his sentiment just as Tayta Rodrigo walked into earshot with a group of older men. Felipe suggested that the mingas needed to be advertised at the tiendas, and that non-participation should be punished more strongly. Conscious of his place in this

suggestion, Tayta Rodrigo simply replied that those who attend the assemblies know when the mingas will be, and besides, everyone talks and should be informed anyway.

Participation is a key concept when thinking about the role of community in Ñamarín. As the former director of one of the local social development NGOs who lives in Ñamarín, Gustavo, put it to me in an interview,

Con tema de migracion hay mucha gente quien quiere pagar a otros. Si esta ausente, esta bien, pero el valor de la persona no puede valorar, porque la persona es importante, por sus ideas mas que por su trabajo. Con animo ... eso no se sustituye. (In regard to migration, there are many people who would rather pay others. If you're absent, that's fine, but the value of the person can't be measured because the person is important, for their ideas more than their work. With enthusiasm ... that can't be substituted).

While he was speaking directly to the issue of out migration as a cause for people not attending mingas, his comment relies on the idea that the presence of a person in a minga is worth more than simply whatever work they might accomplish. Indeed, quite a number of Ñamarín residents live and work or study full time in nearby Cuenca or Loja, and many of them return on weekends to visit family and to participate in mingas (see also Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999:88-91). Benjamin Orlove has similarly noted that for a person not to contribute to the physical, sometimes dirty, and often communal work expected of a comunero is tantamount to implying that such work is beneath them, that there is something “demeaning about treading earth” (Orlove 1998:210). The very physical attachment to the earth (of getting dirty) is synonymous with the agricultural work so associated with rural indigenous lifeways in the region that to eschew such work would be to demean such lifeways.

Somewhat self-consciously, Gustavo was consistently adamant that he regularly took part in *mingas*, though he did not attend those of which I was a part. Other indigenous professionals, including those who occupy residences in the town center, regularly maintain small plots of land for personal cultivation. Still, Gustavo's claim resonates with other cases. For example, while Felipe was voicing a complaint that not enough people were participating of late, I highly doubt he was only concerned with having to do more work. Rather, it was an issue of fairness and the duty of all *comuneros* to contribute to the labour that benefits them all. There was a recurring issue with regard to attendance at community assemblies as well. More than once a proposal was laid to fine people for non-attendance at meetings. After all, it was argued, why should only a few have to suffer a late, cold night when others are home in their beds?

Orin Starn, in his penetrating ethnography *Nightwatch*, documents the rising importance of community assemblies and *rondas campesinas* (peasant rounds, featuring nightly duties to watch for cattle rustlers, as well as community tribunals set up to resolve disputes and punish transgressors), and similarly recalls a preoccupation with participation as one of the main aspirations of these Peruvian peasant organizations (Starn 1999:128-132). The rural, often indigenous poor, who had been silenced and subservient for generations to landholders, hacienda owners, government officials and many others, had by the late 1980s created spaces within which the ideal was participation by everyone, and anyone who refused to attend meetings could be punished. The softer side of this type of peasant organization is, through the ideal of participation, the dissipation of power. In the Ñamarín assemblies, the *cabildo* president is responsible for introducing

topics of discussion and facilitating, asking what members have to say, rather than imposing decisions. The proposal to sanction non-participants was never agreed upon, partly because some attendees felt it unkind to vote for a proposal that explicitly punished absentees who could not, because they weren't in attendance, defend themselves.

One other case to illustrate the importance of participation deals with those who might be considered peripheral members of the community. In particular, there are two men who live along the Panamerican where the road to Ñamarín splits off. Each operates a car wash and mechanic shop, and both rely on water that is maintained by the community. A continual spat between the two became part of a larger debate concerning water use during one assembly. One of the men had written a letter to the cabildo president to complain that the other was stealing water from him by continuously connecting his personal tubing from a point higher up the canals, thereby gaining a more privileged supply and reducing the amount of water the other could obtain. The two men's feud began a heated discussion about how to ensure a continuous water supply to the whole community, parts of which suffer from a lack of water during the day because of the location of their houses (in much of Ñamarín, the patchwork tubing arrangement makes it so that the system, when drained, has to fill up from the bottom, even though the water flows from higher up, before it can reach some of the houses that sit above the road).

Others complained about their water coming out as "agua chocolate," a local euphemism to describe muddy water from a tap. A decision was made to clean one of the reservoirs and to organize another minga to add more tubing closer to the spring at

Uritusinka, but no resolution was agreed upon for the original dispute. In the following days, the general gossip consensus from kitchen tables and around the boley court was twofold: first, those two men were always at each other's water supply, constantly trying to gain the advantage of a limited resource they both relied on for their businesses; and second, if they wanted anything done to ensure their water supply, they should actually take part in the mingas. Both men were quietly accused of trying to take advantage of the community by a range of informants, some of whom felt that the annual minga fees and a bit of trago was not sufficient if they were going to make excess demands on water. The least they could do, then, was take part in the work that did, after all, benefit them.

Returning now to the minga, by the time the initial group arrived at the upper end of the canal where it was still in need of clearing, it was already after nine in the morning, and only about 20 workers had arrived. They began the process of cleaning out all the debris and fixing canal walls where they were damaged, with one volunteer regulating water flow higher up to allow the others to work without standing knee or hip deep in water. By mid-morning, the original group had more than doubled and the small groups of workers wound quickly down the long canal by leap-frogging past each other. Mingas such as these are tough work, particularly when a landslide has blocked off large sections of a canal, but they are also social events, where friends and family work together while conversing, joking, and flirting. All throughout the day, elder men and the cabildo president made sure everyone was contributing appropriately, particularly the younger teens who were more likely to prefer to talk and play than to work. It seems that no one shirks their duties, and I have a personal admiration for Tayta Rodrigo, who always

seemed to be at the head of the pack, sweating bullets and leading by example. The position of president during a minga requires stamina, leadership, and most importantly, the ability to secure organizational help from those mingueros perhaps more experienced or who have expertise in particular aspects of the work being done.

Generally these mingas last until about four in the afternoon, when the quipa is called again, role call is taken, and the procession moves down the hill again. On this particular day, though, four o'clock came and went with more than a few grumbles from the obviously tired participants, who felt their duty was complete. Though no one stopped working, conversations changed to why they were still there, and whether they should be expected to keep on. Answering these muttered complaints, the cabildo president argued that most people had not shown up until midmorning, so they had not contributed a full day. Felipe complained, quietly, that he had been there from the beginning, but kept his head down and worked with the rest until he heard the sound of the quipa, taking seriously his responsibility to the community, but certainly not impressed with those who didn't. Like the fractured nature of consensus in the community assemblies, communal labour and widespread participation do not easily or necessarily translate into the harmonious, romantic envisioning of a closed, corporate community that some have envisioned.

Water and community

In Ñamarín, water is one of the most common topics discussed in community assemblies, and a month's worth of mingas or more are dedicated solely to cleaning the long expanses of irrigation canals, let alone the other labour parties required for repair or

amelioration. Indeed, the idea of participation is in itself conflated with the idea of water. Any household is required to participate in 12 minga days per year, or pay a fine of eight dollars, a low day's wage for labour, for each one. The eventual punishment for non-payment is that the cabildo shuts off water access to a non-compliant household, meaning in effect that the cost of water is the 96 dollars per year in minga fines. This price is not prohibitive to the wealthier households in Ñamarín, but when informants were asked about any comuneros who regularly chose to pay rather than work in the mingas, few could name even one household off the top of their head. Indeed, many of the men whom I asked claimed their household regularly contributed more than was required. True or not, they certainly felt that a contribution to participatory effort in mingas and community assemblies was admirable.

The ethos of participating in the maintenance of a whole, of a community, brings us back to early community theorist Robert Redfield, who has characterized the small peasant community as an entirety nested within a greater whole, that of the nation, or civilization (1956:26-27). The decline of these small wholes comes as civilization feeds upon the "rot of the village" (Homans 1950, quoted in Redfield 1960:110), and the wholeness of the community is eroded as "the norms of the community with respect to such matters as theft, sexual irregularity, and class position are weakened and have become unclear. People do not have strongly internalized values. The ethos is vague and the goals of life are clouded" (Redfield 1960:110). A similar sentiment resonates in the minds of those Saraguros who feel that life is not what it once was, that people are less likely to help one another without the need of something immediate in return, that the

community, set upon by the pressures of increased market integration, outmigration, and the threat of a loss of indigenous identity, must be rescued. But the continued existence of the cabildo councils, the monthly assemblies, and the ongoing necessity of collective labour to ensure common access to water seem to indicate that one shouldn't be too fatalistic about the possibilities of a continuing rural, indigenous way of life in these small villages, these *comunas de indigenas*. Though conflict and worry may characterize the norm more than harmony, Saraguro communities have somewhat successfully carved out a place within that greater whole, the nation. The place of indigenous communities on a national scale comprises the scope of the following chapter.

Chapter 3 - The State, Autonomy, and Protest

Indigenous communities are often said to exist “on the margins” of the state, of society, of the market. These marginal spaces and groups do not, and for long have not, existed outside of the wider national realm; the lifeways of indigenous, rural people are contingent on the values, perceptions, and legislations of a more mainstream national society. For those living in indigenous communities around Saraguro, the uneven roll-backs and interpenetrations of the state at the local level after neo-liberal reforms of the past few decades mean that the state is variously an active partner in financing and regulating important infrastructure (the local school and daycare), a passive, distant entity where community level politics are often concerned, or the prime antagonist against which autonomy is jealously guarded (Radcliffe, et al. 2002). But this is nothing new. This chapter deals with the relationship between the indigenous community and the web of state and societal groups within which it is integrated. I will briefly describe the interweaving of autonomy and state participation by Ecuadorian indigenous groups through time, and then move into a discussion of a nationwide indigenous protest that culminated in a week of strikes, protests, and occasional violence. Legal indigenous communities, enshrined in Ecuadorian law through the 1937 Ley de Comunas, have served as the prime locus of government intervention in indigenous areas, but also serve as enclaves of sorts where the terms and conditions of state authority are contested to protect community and cabildo autonomy. Each example shown here draws attention to the blurred lines at the borders of community and state, and details how indigenous peoples and the state both negotiate these boundaries. Throughout, the principles of

autonomy and citizenship are presented in contexts that show their interconnections, stressing how the images of indigenous communities are continuously negotiated in the ambiguous space between citizen and outsider, between modernity and barbarity, at the margin, but not outside of the state.

The State in the local

For the indigenous communities around Saraguro, the Ecuadorian State maintains a presence at the local level. The comuna de indígenas exists both as the sanctioned political form through which indigenous peoples may make claims on the state, and it also necessarily exists as a locus of intervention through which the state may provide services, inventory its subjects, and make certain demands. Along with the small health clinic, staffed during the week by a young doctor from Loja, and the bilingual intercultural elementary school, there is a sizable daycare funded by the government that sits perched at the far end of Ñamarín overlooking the valley and the community of Tambopamba. These are perhaps the most visible and important services that are provided by various government agencies within the community, but they can also be sites of tension and the source of many headaches for the cabildo council, which is tasked with overseeing their general functioning as well as mediating between the different stakeholders.

The daycare, funded and operated under the *Instituto de la Niñez y Adolescencia* (The Institute for Childhood and Adolescence - INFA) provides a vital service to the many families in Ñamarín where both mother and father work away from the home, as well as to those with only one parent. Along with the childcare, diet and parental

information (that often reflect white-mestizo standards of child development and care, see Jenson 2011), the daycare is also the source of a handful of steady, fairly well paying jobs for young women in the area for whom other opportunities may be limited, given that they also may have children of their own. Consequently, a large announcement hung outside of the casa comunal sparked a mix of outrage, rumour mongering, gossip, and accusations when it was erected in early May of 2011. The poster simply stated that two positions were becoming available at the daycare at the request of INFA. The primary point of contention for most was that the two positions advertised were being made available by firing two of the current daycare staff. Mothers who voiced their opinion said that their children were used to seeing Catalina every morning, and that she was particularly open to ensuring that the children were taken care of even if their parents were late to pick them up. She was to lose her job because, as INFA had requested of the cabildo, she and her cousin were both working at the daycare, and INFA did not want their daycares run by single families.

While this may seem like a relatively innocent issue, the gossip quickly turned into allegations of betrayal being lodged against the members of the cabildo council. By enforcing the demands of the state agency on the local daycare, the cabildo was seen as a pawn of the government, working for outside interests rather than the interests of the community. To be fair, the members of the cabildo would have been in a more difficult position had they refused to comply with INFA; this critical service might have been withdrawn, or brought under closer direction from INFA itself. Tayta Rodrigo, community President, was accused of powerlessness: in his old age, it was alleged that he

had become lazy, absent, and unable to defend the interests of the community from an encroaching state. Worse yet, the Vice President was accused of complicity: as a relatively young law student who spent much of his time at study or in Loja, people were quickly becoming skeptical of his motivations and loyalties. At the heart of the conflict were the responsibilities of the cabildo members, and not the fate of the daycare, important an issue as it was. The cabildo was expected to act as mediator between the various levels of government that interact with the local community, and the community itself as a distinct entity, apart from but yet integrated into the wider nation state. Even as the members of Ñamarín are somewhat reliant on the expanded services offered by the state within their community, there remains an imagination of the locality as separate from the wider political and social system within which it is embedded. This sense of autonomy, reflected in Eric Wolf's vision of the ideal-type closed corporate peasant community, however, is only one aspect of the state-societal relations within which Saraguro communities are embedded.

A history of autonomy, resistance, and citizenship

The principle of autonomy exists alongside a rhetoric of citizenship in Saraguro, and is not restricted to indigenous spheres. Town mestizos and rural Saraguros alike can be heard defending autonomous spaces for themselves, while claiming participation in the nation. Saraguro celebrates its cantonization festival on March 10 every year, a municipal festival that brings in quite a number of visitors for daily concerts, pageants, parades, and games that last over a week. Cantones are the second most local division of political space in Ecuador, comprising a series of rural parishes as well as, generally, a

municipality at the core of the canton. In Saraguro, however, as I suspect is the case for many other areas, the political unit is also a category of identification, where on March 10 Saraguro out migrants, mestizo and indigenous, return to celebrate the place where they grew up and have family ties. On this occasion, the political structural position of the canton within the larger state is somewhat elided, and the declaration of Saraguro as its own bounded, self-governing space is promoted. “Celebrando 188 años de independencia política” (Celebrating 188 years of political independence) was the call of the day, as delegations from neighborhoods, schools, and other towns paraded through the center of town with marching bands, gymnasts, and colourful costumes. Large banners that hung from balconies or were carried in procession read “Turucachi neighborhood salutes Saraguro’s political emancipation,” “Praise Saraguro,” and “Virgilio Abarca Montesinos High School salutes the illustrious city of Saraguro in its liberation.” Such rhetoric is surely somewhat hyperbolic, given the occasion, and simply commemorates the recognition of Saraguro and Ecuador as independent from Spanish rule, and in becoming part of the short lived Gran Colombia.

The focus on independence and emancipation, though, is representative of the multiple levels of identification that people hold dear, meaning that there is often no contradiction in celebrating the “independence” of a canton that is subject to a larger state, just as there is often no contradiction in being a proud Saragureño (white-mestizo of Saraguro) or Saraguro and being an Ecuadorian citizen. Celebrating the cantonization of Saraguro is a celebration of the voice that Saraguro’s representatives have within the Ecuadorian nation, giving it a level of autonomy to self-govern. This autonomy is a

negotiated right to a voice in politics and representation within the state, and should not be confused with a call for sovereignty. Similarly, contemporary indigenous movements, epitomized by calls for collective, ancestral rights to land, culture, and history, may borrow from such anti-colonial indigenous movements as the Tupac Katari rebellions of previous centuries, but do not call for the abolition of the state, and instead demand increased representation and rights within the state, along with less unfavourable state intervention at the local, community level: “Article 98 of the constitution guarantees us the right to resistance, and with that guarantee we will continue to resist. 517 years have passed in the fight, and we will continue with the example set by our ancestral leaders” (Marlon Santi, quoted in CONAIE: May 17, 2010, my translation).

To be sure, the victories of the indigenous social movements of the past decades and the constitutional changes proclaiming Ecuador a pluricultural state have created new possibilities for indigenous identities within the state, but indigenous groups have historically been known to negotiate spaces of autonomy through participation as citizens. Likewise, Luis Macas has made the claim that autonomy, an integral Saraguro value, has been defended through acquiescence as a form of resistance:

Compliance was a way by which to show resistance. There were a variety of such mechanisms and forms of resistance among our people. The mechanisms of resistance maintained the autonomy at the community level. (Macas et al. 2003:220)

One method by which the Saragueros demonstrated their compliance, however reluctant, was by fulfilling their *mita* duties to the Spanish colonial, and later, Ecuadorian state. The *mita* was a form of tribute leveled exclusively on Indian subjects in which labour, rather than payment or goods, was extracted. One of the most notorious cases comes from

Potosí, Bolivia, where Indians worked, often to their death, in the infamous silver mines. Hacienda peons, meanwhile, could sometimes be exempted from such duties since landlords already demanded similar labour tribute.

This system was established in the style of similar Inkaic state demands for labour on such public projects as road construction, mail delivery, and mineral extraction (L. Belote 1978:14). In Saraguro, as part of their mita obligation to the state stemming from the colonial period, and continuing well into the last century, Saraguros maintained a *tambo* (waystation) to provide lodging and aid for soldiers, mail carriers, and other government officials. Though unpaid extractive tribute was officially ended in the late 19th century, similar forms of forced public labour continued well into the previous century, and it wasn't until the 1940s with the construction of the Panamerican highway that tambo duties became obsolete, since the trip from Loja to Cuenca could be made in a single day. Tambo obligations could be costly - lodging, feed, and even horses - but also contributed to a form of supra-communal organization in the form of appointed formal offices (L. Belote 1978:14-17). Thus exempt from the more nefarious mita obligations and in a relatively remote area undesirable for large plantations or haciendas, the Saraguros were indeed capable of maintaining their land base when in other regions vast tracts of the most productive lands were sold or appropriated by state and independent haciendas.

Outward deference to the state is often part of a project to assert individual and collective rights legally conferred but that are absent in practice. The Ecuadorian state has historically nominally included indigenous persons in the nation, often pursuing an

agenda of social welfare that relied on state paternalisms towards indigenous groups in the highlands. In the period from 1895-1925, for example, Kim Clark (1994; 1998; 2001; 2005) has shown that the liberal government, under the banner of indigenous rights, abolished state and church rights to the free labour of Indians on public works projects. Part of an attempt to reduce church influence and sever the debt that tied Indian peons to highland haciendas and to promote coastal plantation work that benefitted the liberal coastal plantation owners, such legislation was peppered with paternalisms that supposedly conferred special protective rights to indigenous groups, seemingly contradictory to the equalization of rights, on the basis that “given their history of oppression under previous governments, Indians deserved special consideration and protection from public officials” (Clark 1994:51). Indians were subject to the “protection” of legislators who saw them as children lacking the reason and capacities of full adults, while elites also had to take steps to protect society from Indians’ supposed “congenital inclination towards immorality” (Guerrero 1997: 566).

Subsequently, indigenous persons were able to petition the state against abuses by landowners or public officers on the basis of their rights within the state, and by reflecting the state’s view of a child-like indigenous class back at them.

We are the Indians of the parish of Tixán, Alausí canton, where, violating the constitution and the dispositions of the Law of Internal Administration, our individual rights are assaulted by the authorities of our parish, who martyr us with demands for forced labour As you are the primary authority of the province, we beg your protection to save our miserable race from this yoke, (quoted in Clark 2005:56)

writes one indigenous group in 1914. In the latter half of the 20th century, Andean states underwent a series of agricultural reforms that (partly) aimed to redistribute hacienda/

huasipungo land to peasant and indigenous populations as part of a project of modernization and national development. Essential to this attempted reconfiguration of production was an attempt at the “remaking of national identity” that re-valORIZED and appropriated select ethnic and indigenous cultural components in order to bring indigenous peoples into the fold of the state as national subjects (Crain 1990:49). This project was also aimed at modernizing the Indian: to educate, to reform, to weed out the negative aspects of Indianness so that indigenous populations could participate fully, in their cleansed version, in the national project. Indigenous communities were to act as the method of intervention, through which Indians could learn the practices of governance and be redeemed from the servile ineptitude, born from centuries of colonial domination, that was seen to characterize their “race” (Lucero 2003).

As part of the attempted redefinition of the place of indigenous peoples within the nation, of the process of mestizaje that would transform Indians into mestizo citizens, certain aspects of indigenous material culture and history were adopted into the national envisioning. In this way, the long pre-Columbian history of the Americas could form part of the history of the nation, rather than simply the history of indigenous peoples. The great Inkaic sites in Peru, for example, could tell of the indigenous past of a now mestizo nation: mestizaje through appropriation of both indigenous and European cultural forms. But the backwardness, the rebelliousness and filth of the contemporary Indians could still be construed as anachronistic and antithetical to the modernizing designs of the state.



Figure 9: Participating in the *Pase del Niño* parade, a young woman is costumed as an “Indian.”

The *Pase del Niño Viajero* (Passage of the Traveling Child) is another example of this process. This parade is held yearly on the 24th of December in Cuenca, commemorating both the birth of Jesus, as well as the passage of a figure of Christ through Ecuador. Leading the procession through the streets packed with tourists and citizens alike is the archangel, followed on horseback by Mary and Joseph with their newborn and surrounded by costumed wise men. Neighborhood bands thump out rhythms for school dancers who twirl around maypoles, while beauty queens sit on their floats, waving to the crowds. Indians are present as well, but these are largely portrayals of indigeneity incorporated into the national society: white Cuencanos dressed as exotic Shuars or Huaorani from the Amazonian basin, complete with painted faces and

headresses with plastic feathers. These delocalized images of indigenous material culture are encapsulated within the national depiction, but the attempts at re-making the national identity into one which is accepting of indigenous lifeways have seemingly not extended into the actual lives of many indigenous peoples.

Inclusion in the national self image does not erase or stop the continuing social exclusion and racism. Still, following these attempted changes, the past few decades have seen indigenous federations fighting for their rights as citizens, producers, and patriots of the Ecuadorian nation. Accordingly, there has been a refocusing of rural identities as indigenous, rather than as *campesino*, as the Ecuadorian and other national governments have partially acknowledged specific indigenous rights, and as the “new” social movements combine indigenous calls for self determination with rural and *campesino* concerns for access to land, water, and other resources (Jackson and Warren 2005).

By appropriating the rhetoric of the state, indigenous groups have long been able to protect small, contested spaces of autonomy through a discourse of citizenship. The expanding role of indigenous federations, indigenous political activists, and largely indigenous NGOs in the last two decades mean that the state paternalisms that considered indigenous peoples to be of an inferior, outdated and childish race to be protected may be largely absent, and there is no question that highland indigenous communities are players in the Ecuadorian nation state. “La lucha continua,” one young Saraguro NGO worker says, but the fight is within the system, as citizens fighting for their rights as part of a larger society, not separate from it.

Indigenous civil society in protest

Still, it would be a mistake to claim that indigenous communities are not on the margins. Rural, semi-proletariat, campesino and indigenous groups are those often affected most negatively by the interests of the central state, and are the last to see any benefits. It is in this context that in May of 2010, CONAIE and FEINE, two large national indigenous federations, called on communities across Ecuador to protest against proposed water legislation that would have placed the country's water supply under the direction of a government appointed body in Quito. As seen in the previous chapter, water is certainly one of the most fundamental and contentious resources in Andean indigenous communities, and its regulation forms part of the basis of local politics and communal participatory life, so it is perhaps no surprise that water rights have been such a contentious issue in Ecuador as in Peru and Bolivia (Bolin 1990; Levieil and Orlove 1990; Perreault 2008; Trawick 2003).

Andean indigenous civil society encapsulates a range of organizations and political structural units that operate at multiple scales. From the grassroots of indigenous communities themselves, cabildo councils represent their members at assemblies of different cabildos within parishes and cantones, and larger ethnic organizations as well as provincial and national pan-indigenous federations represent indigenous interests in the political sphere. By acting together on a national scale, such organizations have at times been very successful in pursuing their agenda. CONAIE, the national federation representing indigenous groups across Ecuador, has successfully lobbied for bilingual education, indigenous representation, and a declaration of Ecuador as a pluricultural state

(Selverston 1994; Zamosc 1994). It has also played a large role in organizing the not infrequent strikes, roadblocks, and indigenous uprisings. The most famous of these strikes was the 1990 *Levantamiento* (uprising), when highland indigenous groups across Ecuador organized to block roads, occupy churches, march on government buildings, and stop production in general strikes to lobby against failed land reforms that continued to deprive indigenous peoples of adequate land. What makes such large scale organizing possible is a scaling up of community level participation, with each community or lower level organization agreeing to support the movement as a whole. Such ad-hoc organization from local cabildo councils and indigenous communities themselves, taken collectively, amount to national protests (Zamosc 1994).



Figure 10: The *paro* at San Vicente.

On May 6th, 2010, the leaders of three national scale indigenous federations came together in a speech declaring a unified front against President Correa's proposed *Ley de Aguas* (Water Law) which, it was feared, would have taken water regulation and maintenance in indigenous communities out of the hands of comuneros themselves, and provided the government with an increased ability to prioritize water rights to oil and mining enterprises instead of agriculture and subsistence. Interestingly, this law would have had much less of an impact in the Saraguro area than in other predominantly indigenous regions since water is relatively plentiful, mineral extraction is minimal, and the indigenous communities themselves are able to claim historical and continued ownership over the land the canals flow through. In the central and northern Ecuadorian sierra, land was appropriated by the state and large landowners over centuries, and the canals in many areas were built to provide water to those interests. Consequently, any water flowing through them could be somewhat privatized by the landowners under the proposed legislation. The indigenous organizations were fearful that the numerous communities that currently draw their water from the canals running along their villages might no longer have dependable access. For Saraguro, the water law could have meant that the municipality had increased power in its negotiations with the communities to secure its own water. Many protesters were also skeptical about the increased presence the state would have had in the communities.

The combined CONAIE (National Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador), FEINE (Federation of Indigenous Evangelicals) and FENOCIN (National Confederation of Peasant, Indigenous, and Black Organizations) statement declared,

among other points, an anti-neoliberal agenda, a defense of constitutionally recognized rights, and a call to radical action on a national scale: “We ratify and call for the radicalization of the national mobilization in defense of life and water” (Andrando et al. 2010, my translation). For communities like Ñamarín, where both communal and individual labour is continuous to ensure access to water for agriculture, cattle, and homes, the prized autonomy of self-governing hydrological resources was at stake. The canals that string along the páramo down to the community are a testament to the deep connection to place that, at least in part, results from a long history of residence. The history of the community itself is, quite literally, carved into the earth through the canals that date past anyone’s remembering. Years of labour and investment, partly NGO contributed over the past half century, have resulted in the ever unfinished system. All of this labour has been done without government support or intervention, except where, in some communities, the municipality of Saraguro has a vested interest in securing its own water. It is nearly unthinkable, then, for many residents, that the government should gain ownership or even accountability over a resource that is secured and maintained by communities themselves.

Subsequent to the announcement by the indigenous federations, and in the midst of increasing protests in Quito and news coverage of heated debates in the National Assembly, the cabildo presidents of Saraguro parish gathered and, supporting popular opinion in many of the communities, including Ñamarín, agreed that two roadblocks would be organized for the following week in conjunction with protests elsewhere in the country.

The paros

A *paro* is a strike, and is one of the favoured and most effective means of protest routinely employed in indigenous led protests in Ecuador. The main, if not only, road that unites northern and southern Ecuador and connects to Colombia and Peru is the Panamerican highway that winds through the inter Andean valley, cutting through many of the major highland towns as well as a large number of indigenous communities. By blocking off traffic on this one strip of road, protesters can effectively stop transportation and commerce flowing through the entire country. Two roadblocks were set up on either end of the highway outside of Saraguro, largely isolating the town.

Early in the morning on Wednesday, May 12, I walked down below Ñamarín to the highway, where there was already a long line of cars and transport trucks sitting. Two trees had been placed across the road in the night, and a growing number of people from the four communities in charge of this lower blockade were assembling. Someone had brought a chainsaw, and we were called to help fell trees and move boulders by a youth from Oñakapak who was taking it upon himself to fortify the blockade. As teams of men began moving more trees and branches onto the road, a large group of transport workers and others had gathered at their side of the roadblock, and, resigned to the fact that they would most likely be stuck there for a while, playfully joked to the indigenous men piling more rubble onto the road: “!Si, muevalo, muevalo, No, por allá!” (Yeah, move it, move it. No, move it away!). One protester replied that those inconvenienced should be helping rather than standing there, since everyone in a community works together. After a while, the protesters settled into a slow routine of sitting, piling more rocks and debris onto the

blockade, drinking, and watching a group of youth push boulders off the high cliff overlooking the road, laughing as the stones touched the electrical wires and sent sparks flying.



Figure 11: Protesters prepare for the arrival of the police at the Ñamarín roadblock.

By midmorning, excitement began to rise after boredom had set in. Rumors of possible action to be taken by the police spurred people into action, and one local NGO worker had brought his tractor, prominently bearing the NGO's logo, to help shore up the defenses. The directors of the two Saraguro NGOs, as well as representatives from indigenous federations had taken it upon themselves to communicate between the upper and lower roadblocks and read out a list of grievances prepared by CONAIE in order to inform and educate. Meanwhile, individual donations of food, including a gift of bread

and cookies from a sympathetic *consejal* (local elected politician), were accumulating, and a makeshift kitchen was set up to feed those manning the roadblock. This kind of popular protest relies heavily on individual action and interest, including the time that people give to make sure there is always a presence, the liquor that is shared, and the food prepared on site.

Afternoon brought news that a detachment of police from Loja had arrived at the roadblock of San Vicente with orders to open up the road, and had begun to fire tear gas into the crowd. Each cabildo president at the Ñamarín roadblock was tasked with sending five *tigres*, strong young men ready to fight, in order to help maintain the paro. By the time we arrived at San Vicente, each armed with a small branch as a weapon, the police were in retreat and the tear gas and smoke from burning tires were being put under control. Teenagers were excitedly running around collecting empty gas canisters as souvenirs of the action, and the victory raised the spirits of the protesters so that when the police returned to negotiate, they were escorted by a group of indigenous men bearing staffs, branches, and flags.

With all of the action at the upper roadblock at San Vicente, the mayor of Saraguro (part of the ruling Movimiento PAIS party) had dispatched a team of municipal tractors to clear away the blockage at Ñamarín. By the time I, along with the team of *tigres* had returned, a large group of seemingly angry protesters had blocked the bulldozers into a now defunct gas station by the highway. The three municipal employees, obviously frightened, were stranded standing on top of their machines, surrounded by a growing mob of protesters. Two NGO professionals and an indigenous

lawyer who were largely responsible for maintaining and informing the roadblock made their way through the crowd to the bulldozers, and persuaded the three men to come down and talk as other young indigenous men clambered up onto the machines to stake their claim.

From all around, a chorus of “Al poso! Al poso!” (“To the well!”; a reference to practices of community justice that will be explained below) rose as the three municipal employees, now surrounded, uneasily shifted their weight and cowered in response to the overwhelming mob threatening to punish them for daring to dismantle the blockade. These men were not privileged to see, or failed to notice, however, that many of the faces surrounding them were smiling, and not menacingly. Eventually, the crowd was quieted down, and the leaders of the paro began to negotiate with the municipal employees, whose fear of the crowd likely made them more receptive to the calm, if patronizing, voice of the Saraguro NGO director acting as negotiator:

Ustedes trabajan para la municipalidad, no? Y que es el gobierno sino el representante del pueblo? Entonces, estas máquinas apertienen al pueblo, a nosotros. (You work for the municipality, right? And what is a government if not the representation of the people? And so, these machines belong to the people, to us.)

Convinced or coerced, the workers agreed that they would take one bulldozer down to the roadblock and pile on three scoops of dirt in order to help out, but that they wouldn't talk to anybody else or be bullied any more. The three scoops were supplemented by five more by the time the crowd was convinced to let them go. In a later interview with the NGO director, he added, proudly:

Ellos, los operadores, no tienen culpa. [The protesters] dejaron libre a ellos, de cumplir una sanción a favor del pueblo. La cosa de la bomba

era elección del pueblo. (They, the machine operators, aren't to blame. The protesters left it up to them, to fulfill a sanction/obligation on behalf of the people.)



Figure 12: A municipal employee is stranded on his tractor by protesters.

This series of events, stemming from what was a beautiful rhetorical inversion of representation within the state as to who constitutes “the people,” was for many the highlight of the roadblocks that will surely be remembered. This reversal of power, however brief, speaks to two important aspects of indigenous representation and protest that are worth examining: the role of projecting a certain type of indigenous community to outsiders, and the relationship between autonomy and citizenship in rural Saraguro.

Projections of the ideal community

As seen previously, communities are almost never the unified, homogenous, static groups that some believe or desire them to be. This is certainly the case for those indigenous communities around Saraguro, but nationwide, primarily indigenous protest based on community organization relies on the image of a community united. Accordingly, indigenous communities have a reputation and capability to be presented to outsiders, Ecuadorian or otherwise, as unified fronts of action. For communities in search of spaces of autonomy impenetrable to the machinations of the state system, the presentation of unity, backed by the threat of violence, is an essential tool. Such representations rely on a continued racial and cultural divide between indigenous peoples and white mestizos that are more aligned with a mainstream national envisioning. The divide is manipulated by multiple parties, perhaps most evidently in times of protest when the goals of indigenous groups and the national government are most at odds.

The image of an Indian “uprising” plays upon the continued idea of indigenous peoples as violent and anti-government, an idea embedded in deep historical fears. The rural highlands have long been associated with Indians, with the urban centers of power

seen as bastions of civility and whiteness, islands in a sea of only partially bridled barbarity. At any time, it is feared, the hordes of Indians might break loose and descend upon the city to exact revenge for a history of subjugation. Brooke Larson has noted that even in the early republican period, when Indian tribute and forced labour were first abolished, creole actions were more often motivated by fear of the “explosive discontent of the native masses” than by a desire for political reform and liberty (2004:35). In May 2010 the term “uprising” was commonly used by the televised news media in an attempt to discredit the demands of CONAIE and individual communities as an attack on the rest of the nation. Meanwhile, CONAIE and the roadblock organizers in Saraguro emphasized a position subordinate to the power of the state, while drawing on ideas of the defense of a common resource important to all Ecuadorians. At the Ñamarín roadblock, one organizer, speaking not just to the assembled indigenous protesters, but also to the stranded transport workers and others walking through, announced that the “movimiento en defensa del agua y de la vida” (movement in defense of water and of life) was indigenous led, but of direct benefit to mestizo campesinos, to the Afro-Ecuadorian poor who were equally dependent on easy access to clean water, and to urbanites who likewise depended on the sources of water that flow from highland communities down to the urban centers.

While defending the nobility of this protest and the value of indigenous activism to the nation as a whole, activists and protesters also played upon white fears of Indian irrationality, and on the darker, dangerous image that mestizos commonly associated with the indigenous community. Chanting “Al poso!” to the surrounded municipal employees

was a significant act that drew from the vigilante image of the self-policing indigenous community. To the many non-indigenous informants who I encountered at the outset of my fieldwork in Saraguro, the indigenous communities were seen to be enclosed and would be resentful of an outsider. I was especially not to be in a community at night, since one step out of line would result in a lynching, the type of punishment evoked by the chant of “Al poso.” The chant was an obvious threat to the three men from the municipality, who certainly would have known of the reputation of indigenous communities to take justice into their own hands and punish misdeeds with whippings, beatings, stinging plants, late night dunking in frigid wells, or, at the extreme, lynching. Lynchings of outsiders in indigenous communities have grabbed the attention of the popular imagination and scholars alike (see, for example Colloredo-Mansfeld 2002; Goldstein 2004; Krupa 2009; Starn 1999).

The practice of *justicia comunitaria* (community justice) applies to comuneros who steal or cheat, but the most infamous cases are those public lynchings that put punishment of an outsider on display, and act to claim indigenous communities as autonomous spaces where the government and the police no longer have jurisdiction. At least in part, such practices have arisen where the responsibilities of the police and government to protect citizens, in this case rural, campesino and often indigenous, are unfulfilled, meaning that communities take it upon themselves to protect their property and laws. Such was the case in Peru in the 1980s, when *rondas campesinas* (peasant rounds), community organized peasant patrols, were used to combat increasing cattle rustling (Starn 1999), and is also apparent in Goldstein’s (2004) analysis of a barrio

lynching in Cochabamba, Bolivia. These cases were read as local condemnations of a state that had failed to evenly govern mestizo and indigenous spaces, and ensuring that the violence was public meant that indigenous groups could simultaneously criticize a government's abdication of responsibility, as well as declare an autonomous space where the agents of the government were no longer welcome. Fear of unbridled Indian justice was key to curbing rural crime, and that same fear was used to ensure that the municipality's men, now in indigenous hands, would "choose" to help out, rather than hinder, the protest efforts.

Similar to the Peruvian case, Saraguros tell of a rise in cattle rustling as one of the main reasons for the establishment of community justice in the region. As many Saraguro proponents of community justice believe, if the communities were just to give over thieves and cattle rustlers to the police, either nothing would happen or a small bribe would be paid, and the thieves would be let loose. With community enforced justice, the physical price for transgression can be high and there is, at least principally, a focus on remuneration for the victims. In one recent Saraguro case, a group of *costeño* (from the coast) cattle rustlers were caught and beaten before being handed over to the police. In somewhat of a legitimation of community justice, the police then paraded the thieves in the back of a pickup truck around one of the central plazas in the town center, allowing the mostly indigenous crowd to pelt the bloody, exhausted captives with insults and the occasional fist.

The sheer publicity of the most violent lynchings inspires a not unfounded, calculated fear, brought out by images of the burning of an afro-ecuadorian repeat

offender in Cayambe in 2003 (Krupa 2009) or, more recently, the highly publicized stripping, beating, and near drowning of a group of men accused of murder in the parish of Zumbagua, both cases occurring in highland Ecuador. To be honest, there was little risk of such punishment for the municipality's men during the May 2010 protests, since the indigenous movement as a whole would have lost the moral high ground. Indeed, in San Lucas parish the next day, the same contingent of police from the provincial capital of Loja that had previously fired tear gas on the San Vicente roadblock in an effort to clear the highway had been trying to quell further protests, and had taken eight indigenous Saraguros hostage (into custody). In response, the protest organizers in San Lucas captured a police officer, and a panel of comuneros savvy in community justice was organized to decide what to do. In the end, according to one Ñamarín representative, indigenous and police negotiators - along with each of the detained - were brought together in an effort to dissolve tensions and decry the violence of the past couple of days, with guilt being acknowledged on both sides.

Christopher Krupa (2009) has criticized scholars for ignoring a lynching's outcome as a move to assert autonomy that actually delegitimizes the right of indigenous groups to self-govern in the eyes of outsiders. The threat of violence may reinforce historical fears of Indian uprisings, therefore lessening support for protests that are ideally presented as peaceful, and generally in line with the desires of other social groups. The highly visible nature of community justice serves to present a coherent response to an aggression against a whole. In Saraguro, even the threat of community justice can quickly resolve a conflict in favour of an indigenous person who, alone, would pose no

threat. Community justice provides an opportunity to play upon that fear of the Indian collective, reinforcing the perception of rural communities as closed. However, indigenous groups must mediate the negative views of themselves in order for their calls to gain widespread acceptance. Recall that this particular protest was framed by activists as a “movement in defense of water and life,” not a movement against a government that has historically only been interested where it suits its own needs, and should therefore keep out of our business.

Autonomy and indigenous citizenship in a pluricultural society

A similar act of discursive mediation on the indigenous/state margin was being made by the rhetorical inversion by which protest leaders conceptualized themselves as “el pueblo.” By casting themselves as “the people” and attempting to frame a discourse of defense of life and water, even while protesting a proposed government initiative, indigenous protesters were simultaneously affirming their place within the nation and decrying further government intervention that would, very likely, bring each of their lives under stricter governance through increased regulation of water. The rhetoric employed cast indigenous peoples as citizens and members of an Ecuadorian nation that has constitutionally recognized their particular place in society (see CONAIE: May 17, 2010). The successes of indigenous federations and the indigenous movement in Ecuador have come as groups such as CONAIE have engaged with the state, rather than having opposed it entirely. The hegemonic process of the Ecuadorian state to assert itself and its right to govern are not what is at stake here, and Steve Stern has argued that even since the colonial period native Andeans have often chosen to interact with the state apparatus

to further their claims, rather than engaging in open rebellion against the right of the state to exist (Stern 1982). By channeling discontent and grievances through, for example, the state judicial system, indigenous groups have sought to rectify the imbalances between stated and actual individual and collective rights. Quite plainly, part of what was at stake during the water protests was the responsibility of the government to fulfill its inclusive rhetoric, and indigenous groups were campaigning for their legal rights as indigenous citizens, not simply as indigenous peoples. This was indigenous protest, not indigenous revolution.

The current president of Ecuador, Rafael Correa, was brought to power on a popular platform that, until recently, had support from indigenous and rural spheres. Correa's face can be seen regularly on large billboards that proudly make the claim that "La Patria ya es de todos" (The nation now belongs to all). Such inspiring rhetoric sounds all the more hollow when, fighting for popular and free access to the water that flows through indigenous communities, the municipal and federal governments, backed by the police, attempt to quell the right to peaceful protest. As much as many may see indigenous groups as continual outsiders, troublemakers, and impediments to progress, the government's claim that indigenous peoples form an integral part of the Ecuadorian nation took a more inclusive stance. When that claim was seen to be hollow, indigenous groups mobilized to assert their rights and their place within the state, just as indigenous hacienda workers had turned the 20th century liberal government's rhetoric against itself.



Figure 13: Two youth destroy a billboard.

But just as these groups and communities seemingly acknowledge the existence and authority of the state, they negotiate their place within it. The nation state, as elaborated by James Scott (1998), governs by reducing the complexity of human society, thereby making it legible, visible, and controllable. While many subaltern movements and groups may not inherently question the existence of the state, they often attempt to disguise or occlude certain realms of activity in order to maintain spaces of autonomy which governmental interventions are unable to penetrate. In Saraguro, as Luis Macas suggested, acquiescence was one strategy by which Saraguros could maintain their landbase and their culture by portraying themselves as subservient, and thereby countering any claims that direct governmental intervention was necessary. Part of this

effort entails using the categories made available by dominant groups, such as the rhetoric of inclusion and human or collective indigenous rights accorded by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Similarly, the proposed water law can be read as an attempt to bring communities' water within the purview of the state, a project that would have meant more direct governance of these indigenous communities that pride their autonomy. Like the INFA debate, communities were attempting to negotiate the place of the state within the community, as well as the place of the community within the state.

Indigenous communities, then, rely on certain essentialized projections of themselves, some of which depend on violent imaginings, in order to create and guard the spaces of autonomy that are desired. These "spaces" are quite physical in the sense that outsiders can often be wary and hesitant about entering indigenous communities, and the police are rarely, if ever seen within many of the communities around Saraguro. The space of indigenous autonomy is also, however, a cultural and racial divide that continues to separate highland indigenous communities and a more mainstream, mestizo national society. These are the "margins" on which indigenous communities are said to reside. The simultaneous expressions of inclusivity (as "el pueblo") and exclusion (but cross us in our space and be punished) in the May 2010 protests serve to illustrate how the place of indigenous communities around Saraguro are continuously negotiated. As it stands, the position of indigenous communities in the Ecuadorian state and society is ambiguous: movements attempt to delineate spaces of autonomy, while simultaneously drawing on the inclusive rhetoric employed by the state and enjoying certain state services in

indigenous communities, thereby affirming the place of the state while countering its most disadvantageous penetrations at the local level.

Chapter 4 - Multiple Imaginings of Indigeneity and Being Indian

One afternoon in late May when the corn harvest was underway and much of the casual conversation in Ñamarín centered on the tasty prospect of fresh, juicy choclos that are a momentary delicacy available only just after the corn has ripened, but not dried, I was invited over to a newly built and relatively opulent house for conversation and a meal of *humitas*, a type of doughy pastry made from the ground fresh corn kernels and steamed in the husk of the plant. Though Ñamarín, like most communities in the area, boasts a diversity of houses reflecting a range of incomes, this house in particular stands out since, unlike the majority of the expensive cinderblock dwellings, the two story structure was made from red brick. Last year's potatoes were spread beside the entryway, where chickens pecked at the bugs who had infested the tubers that had been set aside as seed. The owners were hoping to salvage what they could so they wouldn't have to buy new potatoes to plant. Further into the house, well lit by the expansive but empty window frames, a refrigerator, rare for the area, hummed quietly in the spotless tiled kitchen where Karen, a woman perhaps in her early 30s, was preparing lunch and dicing fruit to be put in plastic bags and refrigerated for later use. Karen was eager to interview me for a project in a cultural studies class she was taking by distance from a university in Loja, meanwhile I was hopeful that her husband, Jose, an environmental engineer with one of the prominent local Saraguro-run NGOs, would have something to say about the recent water-related strikes and mingas.

By the end of the afternoon, Jose had steered the conversation to a loss of traditional ways that, within his own family, he was trying to rectify by speaking Kichwa

in his home and by teaching his kids how to weave. Somewhat self critically, Jose argued that

No somos autenticos, no somos puros. Llevamos en nuestro ropa, comida, y pensamos conjunto. Eso es el mas importante para mi: no somos puros, pero si somos indígenas.
(We're not authentic, we're not pure. We still have our clothing and our food, and we think ourselves together. That's the most important for me: we're not pure, but we're still indigenous).

Jose was speaking to the growing discussions in Saraguro that question what it means to be an indigenous person, or a Saraguro specifically, in a period when many young men and women leave the area in search of work or education, when the possibilities of indigenous livelihoods have expanded beyond the agro-pastoral life that is still seen as an essential aspect of Saraguro identity, but when fewer youth espouse a desire to raise cattle and stay in the indigenous communities. Jose and Karen have both been able to take advantage of these opportunities, but are also self-conscious of their involvement in community politics and farming. Still, they feel that a process of mestizaje and a loss of what they feel are more traditional ways are threatening the cultural purity that makes Saraguros a proud example of indigenous tradition.

This idea of a lost tradition, of abandoned indigenous ways of life is prevalent in Saraguro, and is best epitomized by the relatively recent emergence of a cultural revitalization movement promoted mainly by semi-urban, wealthy, intellectual NGO and education professionals like Jose and Karen. This movement does not by any means represent the whole, or even the majority opinion in the area, though because of its close attachments to local and international NGO backing, it is beginning to occupy a large amount of rhetorical space. Based on an envisioned Inkaic identity and history, an

examination of this quasi-religious indigenous revitalization effort will shed light on the discussions taking place about what it means to live as an Indian, as a Saraguro, or as a purified indigenous person in the present. This chapter presents some of these discussions and places them in the context of growing NGO involvement and a global discourse of indigeneity that has come back to effect change locally.

Becoming and being Indian

Jose's comments evoke a certain reflexivity, perhaps born of self-doubt, of what it means to be an indigenous person in contemporary Ecuador. In order to properly contextualize his comments, we must first (however falsely, given that these terms are not completely separate in an individual's envisioning of identity) disentangle the ideas of "Indian," "indigenous," and "indigeneity." Indian is a racially-motivated socially relevant category in South America that came about in the context of Spanish colonization in order to distinguish between the European colonizer and the native colonized, glossed as a universalized difference that tended to ignore the ethnic differences that, in the Andean region, had been maintained under the Inka administration. Local ethnic differences, along with (in Peru, at least) ayllu distinctions, were maintained and enforced under Inka rule, and the veneration of local or ayllu ancestors and deities was largely respected so long as Inka ancestors were venerated as well. In this scheme, local ayllus were in many ways simply incorporated as separate, but lesser groups within *tawantinsuyu* in a relationship that funneled tribute and worship through local power brokers eventually to the Inka and Inkaic ancestors and gods (Silverblatt 2004:189-192). Contrastingly, the evangelical and civilizational project of the Spanish largely ignored local ethnic

differences, envisioning instead the singular category of Indian, attempting to concretize the European/Indian divide into two distinct “republics.”

As with the Inka colonial project, local receptions of the Spaniards varied by region as some groups attempted to reject Spanish rule, while others would have seen opportunities to create new relationships with the Spanish in order to reject Inkaic dominance. As Irene Silverblatt and Steve J. Stern have both noted, the movements aimed at resisting Spanish conquest of the 16th century were typified by a rejection of the presence of the Spanish, but the ethnic and ayllu differences were largely maintained so that no pan-Andean native “we-consciousness” as Indian had yet developed, since movements such as Taqui Onqoy (a millenarian movement typified by its reliance on the supremacy of Andean gods and complete rejection of a future with Spanish presence) were not framed within “colonial definitions of their humanness,” that is to say as a category analogous to Indians. (Silverblatt 2004; Stern 1982). The hegemonic presence of the colonizers, in other words, had not yet been established.

But how did native Andeans eventually come to see themselves as Indians? It is important to remember that Indian is a colonial and relational category, one forged (in the eyes of the Spanish) in the encounter between two distinct groups. For the category to become self-referential and meaningful for the diverse Andean peoples, either in opposition to or acknowledging of Spanish rule, there would have to be a recognition of common circumstances that would overshadow any regional differences. In part, the process of colonization provided ample opportunity for some native Andeans to recognize themselves as collectively disadvantaged by the demands of Spanish

expansion, through the heavy burden of tribute labour, of displacement into *reducciones* (forced nucleated settlements designed to make Indian labour easier to extract, make Indian settlement patterns more easily read and governed, and ease Christian missionizing), and wider social segregation. These impositions, though their success varied by region, coupled with the rhetoric of the Spanish that treated all Indians as minors, provided native Andeans with a framework of common experience to begin to act within and against the state as Indians. “Indianism verbalized the collective experience of Andean colonized subjects - high mortality, loss of lands, insufficient food or clothing, a harried and insecure existence - as a constant assault on life’s fabric,” but also enabled a revisioning of a past colonial experience under the Inka (Silverblatt 2004:196). Through time, categories created by the state can therefore, through the structuring of lifeways around those categories, become the foundations of categories of self-reference.

“Inka-ism,” as it has been called, was, throughout the colonial period, an Indian re-conceptualization of a shared past as Inka subjects, when “ayllus that had never identified with Cuzco when under its rule were now equating the fundamental colonial hostility between Spanish and Indian as a struggle between Spaniards and Incas” (Silverblatt 2004:199). The Cañari, an ethnic group of the southern Ecuadorian highlands, just north of Saraguro, is one group in particular whose colonial identity proclaimed their Inkaic ancestry, even though prior to the 1560s Cañari hostility to Inka rule led them to establish military and political relations with the Spaniards, hoping to recover the autonomy they had lost less than a century before when the Inka finally managed to incorporate them into the empire (Salomon 1987:212). While Silverblatt

offers a convincing analysis of how Spanish colonial state practices may have led to a widespread recognition of a common Indianness, Frank Solomon's Cañari case offers an alternate, but compatible, explanation of how the Spanish desire for gold in the form of burial goods, as well as the infamous idolatry campaigns that destroyed mummies and other objects of Andean worship, may have led to a recognition of common Inka-ness.

It is widely accepted that many highland Andean peoples recognized dead ancestors as living beings; Inkaic mummy worship is one example of this belief that went beyond the borders of tawantinsuyu. "In Quechua thinking a dead person is considered to be present and active so long as he or she has physical existence," and acts as a tie to ancestral lines of descent that eventually root distinct peoples to the places where, in origin myths, they emerged from the ground (Salomon 1987:226). These distinct places of origin explained regional, cultural, and ethnic differences that were maintained under Inka rule, so long as those lines of descent were subsumed under the ultimate ancestral authority of the Inka. When the Spanish began to disinter and destroy these mummies, first Inka ones and later Cañari and others, they also destroyed the active ties to individual ethnic descent, creating a common situation of ancestral "orphanhood," and leading to the possibility of a shared Indianness that drew heavily on a re-imagined Inka descent (Salomon 1987:223-228). In the ensuing centuries, Indianness and Inka-ism served as counter-colonial envisionings of a just Indian world, as leaders of rebellions, such as Tupac Amaru, claimed Inkaic heritage and nobility. All the while, the recognition of themselves as Indians, a category of Spanish thought, serves as an illustration of how debate over belonging and the nature of colonialism in the Andes are framed by state

categories. Accordingly, as William Roseberry has noted for Mexico, the language of the dominant group has within it the possibilities of the resistance to it, which paradoxically must acknowledge the dominant worldview in order to attempt to resist (Roseberry 1994).

The decline of Spanish colonial states, as with other American projects of European expansion, did not herald the death of the social and racial categories on which they were built. Quite to the contrary, the revolutionary states that followed, as well as the liberal, military, and neo-liberal states that exist in the present, have functioned according to the logic that distinguishes Indians from the rest. While approaches to the “Indian Problem” have changed as successive governments have attempted to paternalistically “protect” Indians (as outlined in the previous chapter), to extract labour in ways distinctly reminiscent of the colonial period, or engage more democratically with indigenous peoples, the racial/social categorization remains an integral aspect of social relations. The agrarian reforms of the mid 20th century, for example, sought in many Andean countries, as in Ecuador, to modernize the nation in order to move away from a largely peasant-oriented system of production. Smallholder subsistence agriculture, associated with the rural indigenous masses, was seen as an archaic form that could not compete economically with rationalized, capitalist production. In the same way, then, the lifeways of the indigenous poor were taken as backwards, as impediments to national progress. For the nation to move forward, not only would production have to modernize, but so would the Indian masses have to undergo a process of mestizaje in order to modernize their lifeways and habits of consumption, which were, in the eyes of the economic

reformers, far too self-supporting. These reforms often took the form of social welfare and educational projects, and included “the hygienic reform of their living conditions, basic literacy, Spanish language training, and the encouragement of expanded engagement with the market in place of their subsistence orientation (Clark 2005:57). The threat of culture loss often associated with a process of mestizaje means that, while in the present the Indianness of such peoples as the Saraguros is taken for granted, some, like Jose, perceive an ever increasing cultural mixing in terms of dress and lifestyle, and fear for the loss of identity and history that may occur. Even so, there occur continual reminders that Indian is still a relevant social category quite literally embodied by the Saraguro.

One morning, for example, at the local elementary school in Ñamarín where I occasionally taught English, I remarked to Maria-Esther, a young teacher, that I sometimes had trouble identifying who was from an indigenous family, and who wasn't, particularly if they didn't wear their hair long or dress in the more traditional Saraguro manner. She helpfully replied that last names are usually a good indication, since names like Quishpe, Guaman, Cartuche, Zhingre, and Poma are all common enough (confusingly so, since any particular community will likely consist of large numbers of one or two of those names) for Saraguros. Maria-Esther is one of the educated professionals who has returned to the area to teach and hopefully ameliorate the social conditions of the Saraguro communities, and she admits that her identification as indigenous has in some ways helped her career, since the growth of intercultural bilingual education has created a demand for teachers with knowledge of Kichwa. Still,

particularly as an attractive young woman, she has experienced first-hand the condescending casual racism that persists. When she visits the city, Maria-Esther explained, she is usually addressed as “India,” which admittedly doesn’t bother her, since, after all, she is proud of being an Indian and at least the term is accurate, and better than a number of more pejorative options. What bothered her was when she was addressed by people who didn’t know her as “Maria,” or “una maria,” since the assumption was that all highland indigenous women were called Maria. The irony, I suppose, is that she is called Maria, but she does prefer Esther, since in the area there are a large number of women bearing that name, and most choose to go by their second name. Esther’s case may be somewhat of an exception, however, since it seems the case that Saraguros self-identify on ethnic rather than racial terms; as *indígenas* or Saraguro rather than as *indios*.

While Esther, like many Saraguro women, usually chooses to wear the *anaku* that marks her as Indian when she travels, the naturalization of that racial category is such that people simply *know* when someone is Indian, particularly if they are from a rural area. The initial ignorance I displayed at not being able to identify who was Indian brings up an important point about racial categories in the Andes. As mentioned above, Indianness is embodied, it is not simply a matter of descent and blood as some think of racial difference. “Race is indeed socially fabricated - and the construction site is the zone of interaction between our skin, flesh, and bones, and the world around us,” writes Mary Weismantel, and the social fabrication is based upon particular readings of performances of race, readings that are naturalized to such an extent that “seeing” Indian bodies is easy for those well-socialized individuals, but sometimes difficult for an outsider (Weismantel

2001:188). Weismantel argues, correctly in my opinion, that particularly in the Andes race, ethnicity, and class are entangled to the extent that poverty is a sign of Indianness, and Indianness is supposed to imply poverty, though there are always conspiracies that suggest Indians are simply apt at hiding their true wealth (see L. Belote 1978). The body itself is the locus of Indianness, but not necessarily the source of it, since it is the interactions between the body and the world it inhabits that creates the Indian body through the *yanga kawsay* (the fruitless or toiling life) that it lives (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999:87-119).

These hands and feet, so different in their textures and coverings, render the abstract concept of economic class concrete and unmistakable; and because they locate class within the body itself, they bind it yet more intimately to the concept of race. Peasant feet look like small rhinoceri with their splayed toes, horny heels, and dense soles like armor plating. In contrast, the feet of a mestiza shopgirl, who stands all day in narrow heels, are as broken, confined, and misshapen as if she were the victim of footbinding. (Weismantel 2001:189)

Ideologies of class and race collude to make the Indian body, as with age Saraguro peasants show the accumulated strains of a hard life: hunched backs, skinny and taut legs showing under cortés or anakus, weatherworn faces and hands accustomed to handling farming implements. Even younger Saraguros wear their poverty, with capped or missing teeth and often clothes worn through or bearing a telltale sign of manual labour: concrete dust, mud, the spiny seeds of plants, or the husks from grains recently processed. Others, like Karen and Esther, wear the anaku and embroidered blouses that mark both their Indianness and their ethnicity as Saraguro, and do so proudly. As Esther mentioned, Indianness can be a source of pride or of contempt, but it rarely goes unnoticed. However, returning to Jose's comments, Indianness is not what is at stake when he

laments the loss of tradition. It is taken for granted and naturalized, and not entirely equivalent, but related to, the issue of indigenusness and indigeneity that he is espousing.

Global indigeneity and the hyperreal Indian

The European colonial expansions of the previous centuries, most notably Spanish involvement in Latin America, have served to produce categories of difference that underpin continuing social and political orders. Key among these differences has been the distinction between the colonizer and the native, the white and the Indian. Of course, such categories are simplifications of reality, but the general acceptance of that primary distinction has defined much internal strife in the Americas and elsewhere, as “nativist” resistance come to confront the extractive forces of colonization. For much of the 20th century, such confrontations were largely regarded as state affairs, as the international community was built by states whose claims to sovereignty on the international stage were prioritized over what we now consider to be somewhat global concerns for human rights and liberties (Niezen 2002:29-30). Despite the regional and ethnic differences of the many peoples who were incorporated, however unevenly, in statist projects, the similarities of their experiences have, in the past decades, led to a widespread recognition at the international level of a category of people who are still marginalized geographically, economically, and socially. These indigenous peoples are recognized as having some claim to original inhabitancy of the land they currently occupy or once occupied (original occupancy generally framed in opposition to European colonial expansion), continued cultural traditions that differ from the now-dominant

national norm, and political and economic marginalization that results in relative poverty (Béteille 1998; Kearney 1996; Martínez Cobo 1987; Niezen 2002).

These somewhat legalistic definitions of who constitutes an indigenous people seem relatively straightforward when considering, for example, the Indian tribes of North America who inhabit reservation lands, or the iconic Amazonian Kayapó and Xavante, or even Andean highland populations such as the Saraguro, but increasingly, international bodies such as the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues as well as social scientists have had to deal with claims of indigeneity from other parts of the world where such claims may be less expected (read: less “authentic”). In India and other parts of Asia where “tribal and nontribal populations have coexisted for centuries,” processes of miscegenation, migration, and conflict mean it is not quite so easy to decide who can rightly claim to be indigenous, and in places like North Africa, the possible distinction between indigenous and settler can not be drawn so easily along tribal/non-tribal lines (Béteille 1998: 189). In Southern Africa, the colonial expropriation of San lands has forced vast majorities of San to rely on wage labour on others’ land for subsistence, effectively mitigating their attempts at recognition as an Indigenous people since they no longer rely on “traditional” practices (Sylvain 2002). Theorists such as Ronald Niezen have in some ways attempted to sidestep the problem, and consider only those populations who not only claim indigenous identity, but are recognized as such on a global scale (Niezen 2002: 227).

Part of the problem of identification and definition is that, unlike other legal categories, the term indigenous has become a marker of personal and collective identity,

the content of which is largely dependent on the revitalization or continuation and portrayal of traditional, longstanding lifeways. This attachment to identity has solidly placed indigenous movements under the broadly defined “new social movements” that promote intangible culture, ethnicity, and other forms of identification over material and economic reforms (though those, of course, do play a part) (Escobar and Alvarez 1992). To be sure, the global recognition of the special case for indigenous individual and collective rights has in some ways empowered local and national indigenous social movements. Indeed, as Alison Brysk notes, the focus on identity politics has enabled Latin American indigenous movements to move beyond national spheres, in which they are typically disenfranchised and relatively powerless, and to create transnational and global linkages with other similar organizations, including the growing number of transnational NGOs who see economic development as a brother to cultural or ethnic development and revitalization (Brysk 1996; see Bebbington 1993; 1997; 1999; and Laurie et al. 2005 for a discussion of social capital and indigenous development in South America).

Saraguro bears the marks of this shift to transnational indigenism in a number of ways. Luis Macas, the aforementioned Saraguro politician, political activist, and scholar, for example, has benefited from a relationship with American anthropologists Linda and Jim Belote, having co-authored an interview detailing Macas’ views on Saraguro traditionalism and lifeways, as well as presenting lectures in the United States, principally in 2006 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Macas et al. 2003). Two Spanish NGOs, meanwhile, ACSUD Las Segovias and Solidaridad Internacional, have

sponsored the creation of two local Saraguro NGOs; the Jatari and Kawsay foundations, respectively. These two local NGOs funnel funds on the order of several hundreds of thousands of dollars in to development projects in the area, including school expansions, daycares, local produce collectives, and water conservation and management. Jatari also sponsors four yearly festivals, modeled on Inkaic seasonal rituals, designed to promote a Saraguro identity strongly linked to an Inkaic heritage. The employees and directors of these organizations are at the forefront of the cultural revitalization movement and have, through their NGO connections and ability to secure funding, gained important representational and rhetorical space locally. Indeed, their importance now could be said to overshadow that of the local offices representing Saraguro within the national indigenous organizations such as FENOCIN and CONAIE. The brochures and publicity materials of these organizations evoke the relationship between local ethnic identities and the international sphere of indigenism and social development: by portraying Saraguros as pastoral and tradition bound, the myriad *chakanas* (Andean cross, a symbol with strong ties to Inkaim), stylized suns, and bountiful maize motifs serve more to present a vision of Saraguro to the outside, rather than to strictly inform locals of NGO works.

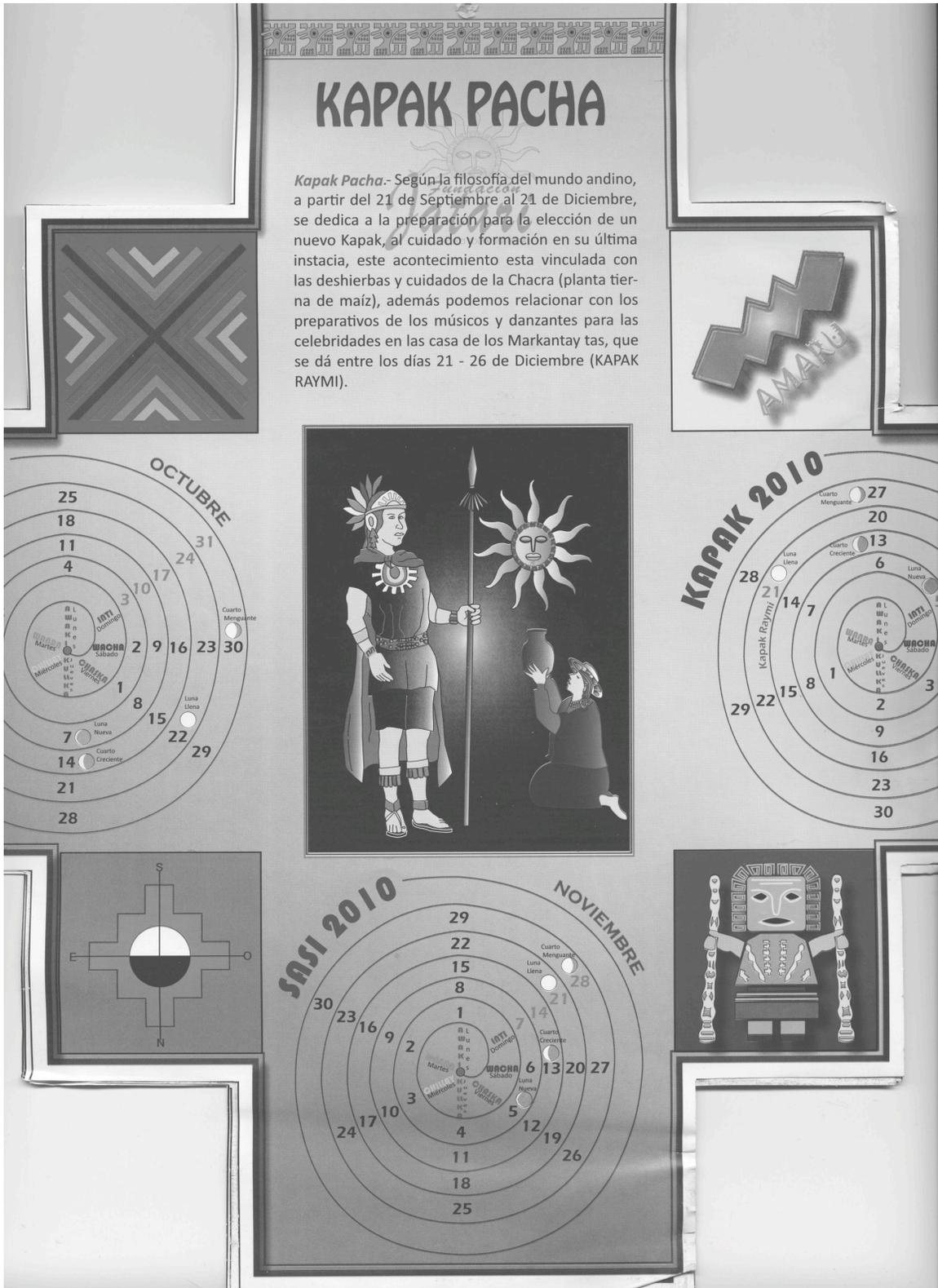


Figure 14: A calendar distributed by the *Jatari* Foundation presents Andean and Inkaic imagery.

While these local-global ties have at times served to promote the causes of indigenous movements, the global focus on indigenous issues has threatened to undermine local efforts: as with the Saraguro NGO brochures that must appeal to an international audience, local indigenous groups must also appeal to the sensibilities and sometimes romantic envisionings held by outsiders of indigenous practices in order to make their claims heard and acknowledged on a wider scale. The Kayapó of Brazil provide a telling case for the dangers of attempting to translate local indigenous contexts into the realm of global conceptions of indigeneity. The sometimes disconnecting visions require that indigenous leaders become cultural brokers: those politically minded, urban-educated or -raised, rural focusing boundary-straddlers who are able to navigate the differences of regional and wider contexts (see Geertz 1960; Press 1969; Sewastynowicz 1983 for a discussion of cultural brokers more generally). In so doing, these brokers may create what Beth Conklin and Laura Graham have, following Richard White, called a middle ground: “middle grounds are forged on the basis of assumptions about the Other and what the Other can contribute to specific goals. These assumptions, observes White, always involve cross-cultural misperceptions and strategic misrepresentations” (1995:696).

For the Kayapó in the 1980s and 1990s, their middle ground was formed on the basis that, facing land loss from resource extraction and hydroelectric projects, they could position themselves as the rightful stewards to their ancestral lands, knowing best how to conserve and protect it from capitalist interests. The global ecological movement, likewise, found in Kayapó leader Payakan a perfect symbol of the noble savage and

environmental protector, antithesis to the evils of modern civilization. The dangers of having select cultural brokers represent and speak for entire groups or communities was laid bare in Payakan's case, as in 1992 he was accused of rape and his NGO and environmentalist partners soon sought to distance themselves from him, and his tarnished image "unleashed the floodgates of media criticism against the Kayapó as a whole" (Conklin and Graham 1995:704). When the veil of "strategic misrepresentation" is broken, indigenous peoples striving to negotiate their place within global visions of indigeneity risk losing the trust, and therefore the funding and help, of international NGO and media worldwide, even when a single person, acting as metonym for the group, proves to be seen as inauthentic in the eyes of outsiders. In other words, attempts to embody the romantic image of global indigeneity that serves to present such peoples as ecologically noble, close to the earth, spiritual, anticapitalist, and antimodern may at times aid indigenous movements to bypass their lack of power within national spheres by relating to global political currents, the inherent dangers of strategic essentialisms risk undermining these movements.

The increasing role of NGOs in assuming responsibilities no longer taken on by the state in the wake of neo-liberal reforms (including, but not limited to: construction of water systems, environmental conservation, educational and social infrastructure) also has a role to play in the (re)production of global visions of indigeneity. As is occurring in Saraguro, international NGOs concerned with indigenous development are not simply concerned with economic development, but also with cultural empowerment and social improvement. These NGOs are often convinced of the social capital inherent in

indigenous communities, where the close social ties and traditional participatory forms are seen to be indicators of spaces where development will be participatory, and therefore more able to bring about long term, positive changes. The problem, as argued well by Alcida Rita Ramos (1991; 1994) for Brazil, is that NGOs rely on these often essentialized envisionings of indigenous peoples in order to decide who merits their attention and help, aiding to bring about what she has called the “Hyperreal Indian”: a third-order simulacrum that not only does not represent the supposed reality of Indians, but has through global discourses of indigeneity and the local-global articulations of such come to replace the “real” Indian in civil society and indigenous politics (Baudrillard 1983:4,101; Ramos 1994).

For Baudrillard, to simulate is not simply to copy or to feign the existence of a certain object or idea, but to replace a supposed real with an imaginary that then comes to be taken as the real.

Thus, feigning or dissimulating leaves the reality principle intact: the difference between “true” and “false,” between “real and “imaginary.” Since the simulator produces “true” symptoms, is he ill or not? ... But what becomes of the divinity when it reveals itself in icons, when it is multiplied in simulacra? Does it remain the supreme authority, simply incarnated in images as a visible theology? Or is it volatilized into simulacra which alone deploy their pomp and power of fascination - the visible machinery of icons being substituted for the pure and intelligible Idea of God? (1983:5-8)

Ramos, likewise, takes the NGO image of the indigenous person to be a confusion between the real lives of Indians - messy, confusing, conflicting - and the ideal Indian portrayed by leaders such as Payakan. NGOs, in their drive to help socially and economically marginal peoples, have come to rely on a particular envisioning of Indians

that is rooted in global indigeneity, and see themselves as championing the “fabrication of the perfect Indian whose virtues, sufferings and untiring stoicism have won for him the right to be defended,” rather than real people whose actions do not always conform to NGO desires (Ramos 1994:161). As Baudrillard states,

Simulation is characterized by a *precession of the model*, of all models around the merest fact - the models come first, and their orbital ... circulation constitutes the genuine magnetic field of events, (32)

and so it is with the portrayals of indigenous peoples: the romantic envisionings of Indian lives come not just to dominate rhetorical and representational fields, but also come to be seen as the real, and in doing so Ramos’ “real” Indians are, in the bureaucratized and politicized world of NGO development, eclipsed by the “hyperreal,” “more real than the real” (Ramos 1994:161).

Though many of these depictions are created and circulated in the global sphere, and certainly find deep precedents in Western thought, from such thinkers as Rousseau and his noble savage, the increasing connections between regional or state level indigenous groups and organizations and their transnational counterparts mean that these romantic envisionings may also come to permeate local conceptions of indigeneity. In other words, real indigenous persons, in their efforts to secure NGO funding and international recognition, may find themselves conforming to this new indigeneity, forged in the imagination and the misunderstandings of the middle ground, but coming back home to the local to be remade as facets of local ethnicity. Remembering again Jose’s comments at the beginning of this chapter, his concern with purity and authenticity makes more sense in the context of the competing visions of indigeneity that, influenced by

global, national, and local discourses, are now at play in Saraguro. Below, I will examine one possible indigenism that has certainly been influenced by global indigenous discourses; neo-Inkaism, and present two alternative imaginings; one that follows Catholic feasting traditions, and a youth sub-culture that, unlike the proponents of the neo-Inaic movement, find no problem in adopting “modern” Western styles and tastes.

The second coming of the Inka

The Inka conquered the area that is now Saraguro less than a hundred years before the empire eventually fell with the arrival of the Spanish. Oral tradition largely maintains that the Inka removed the local population of Cañaris and Paltas who resisted Inka rule, and replaced them with more subservient peoples from a range of ethnic groups from the Titicaca and Cuzco regions of Peru (Ogburn 2008:295-296; Ogburn 2010:171). Despite the relatively short period of Inka presence in the region, the idea of Inkaic heritage and tradition has found fertile ground in Saraguro, reminiscent of those colonial era rebellions of Tupac Katari and Tupac Amaru that sought to unite diverse ethnic groups by a reconciliation with a shared Inkaic past. A small group of local NGO professionals has been leading the neo-Inkaic movement in Saraguro in recent years, aimed at disinterring what they see as a local history that has been lost in the intervening years of Spanish political and cultural domination. The Jatari foundation, one of the internationally funded local NGOs, has been particularly active in promoting seasonal rituals that draw on an Inkaic precedent. The arrival of international NGO funding that coincided with such a revitalization effort is not coincidental, as has been stated, NGOs often pursue social and economic development alongside a commitment to cultural development. In addition to

the celebrations, the two local NGOs have also been working on the initial stages of a community tourism program, building guest rooms attached to family homes, training guides, and producing packages of different activities that tourists can engage in during their stay, from mountain bike riding to shamanic rituals and collective feasts. The argument made by these organizations, as has been made in many other situations of NGO-sponsored sustainable development, was that tourism would contribute to the revitalisation of cultural traditions (Erickson 1996). The prominence of Incaic rituals and newly created shamanic performances for tourists are partly the result of the strong identification some Saraguros express with the Inca past, but the tourist component of the development project as a whole cannot be discounted.

The close interaction with these international and local NGOs, as well as with the small but significant number of tourists and visitors, has certainly shaped the direction that the revitalization movement has taken, as the cultural attractions offered tourists have ultimately become the cornerstones of the revitalization effort. Here, global constructions of indigeneity come to inform how Saraguros present themselves to foreign tourists, but ultimately, also how this group of Saraguros present themselves to themselves. In other words, the hyperreal NGO image of the Indian has, through development funding and cross cultural interactions, come to be the model that precedes the real and upon which these revitalized visions of self, for the neo-Inkans, have been forged. Accordingly, these NGO workers and neo-Inkans play up aspects of Saraguro culture that harken back to a less polluted time, focusing primarily on agricultural and Incaic motifs, simultaneously a representation of reality that plays upon tourists' desires of seeing 'true' Saraguro Indians,

as well as an aspirational self-image towards which proponents of cultural revitalization are working.

The most important of the annual reborn Inkaic celebrations, Inti Raymi (the festival of the sun), held on the summer solstice, was being celebrated for the fifth time in June of 2010. On the Friday before Inti Raymi, the members of the community of Las Lagunas attended, along with a handful of tourists, foreign volunteers and others, a day-long festival at the local elementary school that bears the name of the celebration itself. Families gathered along the grassy mound that flanks the football court, chatting, eating popsicles and waiting for the main event: an Inkaic style ritual commemorating an Indigenous past and present. At the center of the court lay flower petals and choclos that formed a starburst, and tall corn stalks sprouting from plastic buckets ornamented a table where a microphone was set up. More flowers marked each cardinal point, forming a cross around which the ceremony was to take place. As music started playing from a nearby stereo system, Lucho (the school's director), Fortunato (the Jatari project director), and Rosa (cabildo president of Illincho, teacher, and advocate of community tourism) led a group of students in a well-rehearsed dance around the football court. Each wore a long, black tunic trimmed at the bottom in golden sequins, with their hair hanging loose over their shoulders (a contrast to the usual style for men and women, which is a single long braid). Pairs of dancers were directed by the leaders to one point of the cross while another woman narrated the event from the microphone. Each pair, one boy and one girl, were said to represent one of the four ayllullactas (communities) participating in the festival, and each accorded with a cardinal direction and one of four elements; Fire,

Water, Earth, and Wind. As trails of younger students encircled the central group, their heads adorned with bright headbands featuring a single feather, the ceremony itself began. Fortunato provided the music with a variety of flutes while Lucho purified each participant and ritual object by blowing liquor over them. Unlike the similar Inkaic styled ceremonies held for tourists, this ceremony was constructed in order to educate and explain the important ritual aspects, with a narrator adding in elements of spirituality, earth-worship, and reverence for a forgotten past. These aspects were necessary to explain to the gathered crowd, who, though the vast majority were indigenous Saraguros, were not expected to have come with previous understanding of such rituals. The job for the organizers was to present the ceremony in such a way as to teach people how to celebrate as Inka descendants, rather than as Christians. Those, like Fortunato and Rosa, who participate in and guide many of the Inkaic rituals, form the core group of proponents of this type of cultural revitalization and see it as a positive affirmation of a tradition that has been left by the wayside. Well educated, mostly urban and at most part-time agriculturalists, this group has benefitted from their NGO connections and are often the ones most closely associated with the tourist trade. Fortunato, in particular, has been able to use his position to build a large guest house, and the textile factory on his land, stemming from a Peace Corps project his parents were involved in, remains one of the main attractions offered to tourists.



Figure 15: Neo-Inkas lead school children in a ceremonial dance during *Inti Raymi* 2010.

The Inti Raymi festivities put on display the Hyperreal Indian for all to see. Those inconsistencies, the messiness of reality and the dirt of poverty and all the conflicting moral choices that characterize the lives of the majority of those who call themselves Saraguro, and that Ramos' Brazilian NGOs saw as contaminating the people who they were supposed to represent, are absent in this yearly festival of the sun. Instead, the Indians on display are cleansed (quite literally, as there is a ritual cleansing as part of the ceremony) to make a show - not of who Saraguros necessarily are - of who Saraguros could, and should be. The choclos forming the starburst are locally grown and strongly symbolic of a local identity as peasant farmers, a lifestyle that has had to be largely left behind as these self-proclaimed shamans have become intellectuals and professionals, but

they still serve to present the image of a self-sufficient indigenous population living off the land. The musical instruments are percussion and various flutes, since stringed instruments bear the taint of Spanish influence, and the gold-sequined tunics strongly mark a historical tie with the Inka, though traditional Saraguro dress elements are also portrayed. These are the “good” Indians of NGO development; traditional, ritualistic, communal, and pastoral.

These ceremonies, along with the cosmovision they represent, have become a hotly debated topic in the area. Aside from the economic entanglements that channel NGO funding from Spain to local Saraguro NGOs, whose directors are also central to the burgeoning tourist industry and profit from their guesthouses and by putting on similar ceremonies and cleansing rituals for tourists, the Inkaic associations simply do not resonate with the identities of many Saraguros. Local Inkaism positions Saraguro history as usurped by Spanish evangelical colonialism, the effects of which are no longer outside forces, but form an integral part of the quotidian practices and feasting traditions of the area. Catholicism has become intertwined with indigenous expressions across Latin America, and while the civil-religious hierarchies that once characterized many small indigenous communities are on the wane, Catholic feasting days exist alongside the newly reforged Inkaic ones.

Catholic cargo systems

Civil-religious hierarchies in indigenous communities throughout Latin America have long been a topic of discussion and analysis for anthropologists. These cargo systems, as they are otherwise known, are systems “in which adult males serve in a series

of hierarchically arranged offices devoted to both political and ceremonial aspects of community life” (Cancian 1967:283). While the specifics of each cargo system vary, it can generally be said that serving in the successive religious and civil offices within the hierarchy, a person gains prestige and clout, until such a time when they have fulfilled their obligations to the community, village, or ayllu, and may then become a *mayor*, whose voice and opinions are respected (Salomon 2004:79-85). Examples of positions that may be included in these hierarchies include lower level political offices concerning a particular aspect of community organization, such as water management, and hosting or contributing time, labour, and often vast amounts of wealth to Catholic feasts and celebrations throughout the year. Though earlier assessments made little of women’s roles in such systems, Holly Mathews (1985) has outlined how in some Mexican cargo systems offices are shared responsibilities that fall on a household unit, rather than simply the male head, an acknowledgement of the heavy burden that the offices put on women as well as other members of the household. For the Andean region, both Frank Salomon (2004) and Rudi Colloredo-Mansfeld (1999) have made similar observations.

In Ñamarín, a strictly religious cargo system is still responsible for hosting various community oriented feasts at Christmas, Holy Week (Easter), during Corpus Cristi in June, and at other times of the year. These cargoes are separate from the civic duties that fall on the elected members of the cabildo, an occurrence that John Chance (1990) has associated with an increasing penetration of the state into indigenous communities in an effort to exert more control locally. While this may be the case, the previous chapters have demonstrated the sometimes fierce localism and skepticism of

state penetration that prevail in the area, though the *cabildo* system does mean that local politics are, in the end, regulated and defined at the national level, which explains why the local cargo system does not include civic offices. Indeed, as Chance notes,

Preservation of a local *cargo* system of any kind is a conservative strategy, an attempt to assert local autonomy and community identity in the face of external pressures. As national governments penetrate more deeply into community political life, religious *cargo* systems may form to stave off further erosion of village autonomy. (1990:39)

The Holy week celebrations are one of the bigger, and therefore more expensive, cargoes since they last an entire week and comprise a sponsor from each of the Saraguro communities. These *alumbradores* come together at the house of the primary sponsor to host the festivities, which include music, dancing, food, and drinking, the costs of which can be very high. As it happened in 2010, Ñamarín's *cabildo* president, Tayta Rodrigo, was also the main sponsor, and the expenses were spread out among various households in his family, including his sons and daughters who, working and living in the United States, pooled their remittances. Even being a minor sponsor or *mayordomo* of a lesser feast can put a strain on a family's income, leading some people to be disenfranchised with the possible burdens of sponsorship. So, while those like Tayta Rodrigo continue to support the local Catholic tradition, and in doing so promote regular occasions for entire communities to celebrate together, others are choosing to forego the responsibilities associated with the cargo system.



Figure 16: *Fiesta* sponsors stand outside of the church in Saraguro during Easter.

The Holy Week celebrations, like the other festive occasions throughout the year, combine community-wide feasting with Catholic worship that is more closely associated with the Church itself. Indigenous Catholic practices do not, however, always align perfectly with more mainstream interpretations of Christian faith or dogma, having for centuries combined elements of European and Andean spirituality. God, the death and resurrection of Christ, and the Virgin Mary are brought to the center of worship on this occasion, but the mountain deities, local waterfalls said to be manifestations of the Virgin, and the Pachamama/Earth Mother are also respected and celebrated in other ways, sometimes as simply as pouring out a bit of trago. Celebrations such as Holy Week, then,

offer up an image of faith that is certainly Catholic oriented, while being unmistakably local.

On the day before Good Friday, the alumbradores from each of the communities gathered at the house of Tayta Rodrigo, where for days people had been coming together to share in the food (typical food during festive occasions includes guinea pig, boiled maize *mote*, bread, cheese, and potatoes, as well as a beef soup served continuously to give warmth and make sure everyone has something in their stomach during the often long drinking sessions), liquor, music, and dancing. Each sponsor wore their best poncho and iconic woolen hat, with the addition of bright pink scarves, white shawls, and long chains of silver coins around their necks. Accompanied by drums and accordion, firecrackers and other celebrants, the sponsors moved in procession on horseback from the festival house in Ñamarín down the winding road towards the Church in the center of the main plaza in the town. Side by side, the alumbradores and their wives held woven *faja* belts between them, perhaps a more typically indigenous addition to the pink motifs of Easter, as they eventually reached the gathered crowd in front of the Church itself. Two masked clowns entertained those gathered by dancing and suggestively waving their toy drumsticks in the faces and buttocks of the crowd, while the alumbradores stood regal, slightly bored, in front of the massive wooden doors waiting for the mass to begin. Afterwards, the alumbradores would cloister themselves in the church overnight to offer prayers, before once again returning to Ñamarín where festivities continued in a more collective, casual manner. They would make a similar pilgrimage almost every day of Holy week, moving between the mestizo center where the cathedral is located and back

to Ñamarín and the other indigenous spaces, a movement between two poles of worship and spheres of control within and between which the festivities, and indigenous lives in general, are played out (Butler 2006:139).

“Group rituals” like these provide “a strategic means to define and interpret structures of economic and political power within and without the group, and ... provide a vision of the past that delineates the group in its own terms and in relation to the wider context of group relations within the state” (Rasnake 1986:663). Participation in these ritual occasions, then, signals more than just religious affiliation, but also plays a part in defining the place of indigenous groups or communities within the wider sphere of social relations, as well reflecting particular values and histories associated with those groups. So, when neo-Inkaic revivalists criticize these Catholic-oriented celebrations, they are also claiming a separate history that may be cleansed of the colonial stain that inheres in the church. The Inti Raymi celebrations, for example, take place almost exclusively within a single indigenous community, rather than moving between mestizo and indigenous spheres. One notable exception is that on the solstice itself, Fortunato and Lucho, along with many others, led a parade through the town center. Rather than paying respect to what they see as a Spanish institution, as the Holy Week celebrations do for the Church, they were attempting to reclaim the space of Saraguro as indigenous. While some mestizos feel that feasting occasions simply mean that the town will periodically be overrun by unruly Indians (the hired security guards patrolling public spaces on these occasions testify to this fear), there is not the same attempt at a redefinition of space as with Inti Raymi.

Drinking and alternative Christianities

Between (and part of) the devotional aspects of these celebrations, during building inaugurations, wakes, graduations and other feasts and parties, as well as in everyday life, drinking has long been and remains to be a central feature. Drinking in the Andes has long been associated with Indianness, and drinking plays an important role in sharing and general reciprocity during feasts (Butler 2006). Drunkenness, then, is to a certain extent expected of participants, who through a public showing of vulnerability (but not complete loss of self-control or lack of respect) uphold their duty to the social order: “Within the indigeneous world, the most ambitious and respected leaders should publicly demonstrate their vulnerability to members of their comuna and to social and supernatural superiors outside” (Butler 2006:177). Political power in an indigenous community is largely dependent on the acceptance and satisfaction of the majority, who can quickly turn against cabildo members whom they see as power hungry or corrupt. Displaying vulnerability, then, coupled with the mutual sharing and fraternal nature of these Catholic feasts, is a way to ensure goodwill between not just elected representatives and their constituents, but also between neighbours, friends, families, men and women of different ages, and people of differing incomes. Shared gifts of liquor, coupled with the ritualistic calls to drink together and the resulting mutual vulnerability, gives these feasts their capacity to bring people together socially as well as emotionally.

This is, however, an ideal outcome of the heavy drinking that does regularly occur. Many families, and indigenous women in particular, know that sometimes the reality of drunkenness can be much more painful than restorative. The capacity and

knowhow to drink socially is often a necessary skill, especially for those interested in local level politics and wanting to ensure they are seen as humble and of equal status with those they wish to represent. Equally, alcohol abuse is regarded as a serious problem plaguing younger men who are regularly derided for having no other interests than in women, rock music, and liquor. Still others are known for their habitual drunkenness, and there is almost always some gossip floating around about how so-and-so's husband came home drunk again and was abusive, or how their small income was simply being funneled into the hands of the cantina owners who sell beer and more. While most of those who I spoke with on the subject agree that the advent of *justicia comunitaria* has made men more accountable with respect to wife beating, it has certainly not erased the problem completely, nor has it solved the other associated marital concerns that arise. Drinking is coming to be seen as so problematic that, in Ñamarín, ongoing discussions in community assemblies have led some to question the right of cantina owners to sell liquor, since they profit from the possible addictions and immiseration of other comumeros.

The annual *barrio* celebration of the community, usually an occasion accompanied by contemporary popular music, dancing, and a bar, became increasingly criticized in the months of its planning because it was seen to promote alcohol abuse among minors. The older generation of men for whom drinking *trago* and *chicha* is a part of their daily lives, though, remained largely silent; not many would question their right to drink with their hard-earned moderate wealth, and even if the local cantinas and *tiendas* did stop selling alcohol, they could always visit a shop along the highway or in town, or rely on their

social networks that allow them to trade for trago originating from the lowlands, or even to receive alcohol in return for a request of a favour.

Among the most outspoken critics of the culture of drinking are the Protestant Evangelicals, Adventists and other alcohol-abstinent believers that are becoming more and more typical in anthropological accounts of indigenous communities across the Andes. Around Otavalo canton, for instance, Butler describes how an earthquake inspired a number of indígenas in Huaycopungo to repent for their heavy drinking, one strategy being the adoption of a more conservative Protestant faith (Butler 2006). Elsewhere in Otavalo, among commercial weavers and indigenous capitalists, the shift from a drink-heavy Catholic feasting cycle to a Mormon faith entailed a shift in morality (away from the “lowly” connotations associated with the drunk Indian) as well as a shift in domestic economy: by cutting alcohol and fiesta sponsorship out of the household budget, more money could be spent on budding industrial and commercial enterprises, housing, clothing, and schooling (Collredo-Mansfeld 2009:52-54). Though in some places indigenous Protestantism has been associated with North American imperialism and a betrayal of “traditional” Catholic indigenous faith, the recent successes of FEINE (the Ecuadorian Evangelical Indian Organization) within the greater indigenous social movements, as well as the appeal, particularly for women, of an alcohol-free faith mean that evangelism has gained in popularity, but still presents certain obstacles (Lucero 2006:36). One of the most important of these obstacles to address here is just how integral drinking is to sociality and communal celebrations, and how indigenous Evangelicals attempt to be seen as equal participants in community life.

For the Guaman-Zhingre family in Ñamarín, attempting to live an Adventist life means navigating the social field ever aware of their decision to abstain from drinking, though they have found other ways to fulfill their social obligations and responsibilities to the community. Leandro and Linda live in Ñamarín with their four children, and operate a guest house associated with the local community tourism network *Saraguro Rikuy*. Their home, with its second floor balcony and white washed guest room to the side is moderate by local standards; neither the largely windowless, older, and relatively poorer older style, nor the frankly extravagant brick and cement block houses that educated and successful professionals and emigrants to the United States or Spain have had built. Linda and Leandro's home is a testament to their hard work, having been pieced together and added to over the years as their finances allowed and their obligations as parents demanded.

Linda was born in Ñamarín, and her parents and 3 siblings still all live in the community, though are now spread between different houses. Frequently fretting over her children's behaviours, Linda's attitude to parenting self-consciously navigates the distances between her own upbringing, her expectations of her children, and her vision of an ideal mother. As Linda and I got to know one other and became more comfortable in each other's company while shucking corn, gardening, or tending to her parents' cattle, she would often express her concern for her children in a seemingly eternal "kids of this generation don't know how good they have it" sort of way.

Linda grew up in a house whose income was derived solely from the small agricultural and animal holdings of her parents. Her responsibilities would include

tending the cattle with her younger brother Javier, feeding cuyes, and preparing dinner for her parents. Her own children have their responsibilities around the house, though both Leandro and Linda insist they have it easy, perhaps too easy. Linda particularly disliked having to get up in the mornings with her mother, Ana, to harvest wheat or barley since those were long, relatively fruitless affairs. Once actually harvested, the grains had to be milled by foot or by hoof, and then more work went in to picking out the grains from the waste, getting covered in chaff. She promised herself that when she was married, she wouldn't grow any grains. Of course, in the first few years of her marriage, she and Leandro had to grow all they could since neither had a sustained cash income. Now, at least, Linda can choose if she wants to plant barley or quinoa, supplementing with grains from the market in Saraguro.

As a child, life at home for Linda wasn't always pleasant. Her parents were stern, beating Linda and her siblings on occasion. When that happened, the kids could sometimes find refuge by sleeping out with the cattle. Guillermo, Linda's father, was and continues to be an avid drinker, though for a man of his generation that is not uncommon. The long, cold, often solitary nature of tending cattle on far reaching pieces of cleared pasture means that most older, full time pastoralists in the area have trago on their breath, the liquor insulating against the wind. Guillermo and Ana are still regular feast sponsors in the Catholic religious cargo system, and they acted as mayordomo for the Corpus Cristi celebrations in 2010. Linda, meanwhile, remembers too many years when the soup had to be thinned out, when their clothes had to last a little longer, and school supplies went unbought as money had to be saved to sponsor such a feast with meat, trago, chicha,

quetes (firecrackers) and all the other necessities. Unlike Tayta Rodrigo, they didn't have a transnational network of children from which to pool their resources, so Guillermo and Ana had to find alternatives to fulfill what they consider to be their obligations to the community.

Linda left home at 14, eventually migrating to Quito where she found work as a domestic servant in the house of a Canadian couple. Leandro, who was born in southern Colombia, had migrated to Imbabura province in northern Ecuador to live with his grandmother, and made his way to Quito where he found work on a large commercial flower estate just outside of the city. For him, those years were marked by rampant alcoholism and what he considered to be self-destructive behaviour that was typical of the migrant youth with whom he associated. A manager took an interest in Leandro, and asked him one day why he was throwing his life away instead of trying to establish himself. He took Leandro in to town and bought him a mattress, and managed to convince Leandro to buy a small gas stove on credit. Leandro began to try and funnel his earnings towards accumulating household goods so that one day he could, with a good woman, establish a house of his own. His drinking still continued, but he began to think seriously about finding a partner.

About the same time, Linda had also began working at the same flower grower. She remembers the work as dirty and unhealthy, having to pick flowers while pesticides were sprayed all around. Disenfranchised with the Roman Catholic rural feasting cycle that her parents proudly supported, as well as the alcoholism that fueled her unhappy childhood memories, Linda took her years in Quito as an opportunity to find a church that

was more in line with her beliefs. She attended services and studied the general dogma of a variety of faiths, even once being surprised by a congregation who spoke “huebadas” (in tongues, literally “nonsense”) as a part of their devotion. She eventually became a member of an Adventist church near Quito, and the family attends a small Adventist church that has been built just outside of Saraguro.

Linda and Leandro eventually met, though she was not going to have anything to do with a drinker. Leandro took it upon himself to impress her, and vowed to stop drinking. Only once, says Linda, did he drink since they have been together, and she promptly threatened to leave him. He’s been 12 years sober, and neither of them drink even chicha when it is offered. When Linda fell pregnant with her first child, she decided that it would be better to move back to Ñamarín to raise her children, so Linda used the piece of land she inherited from her grandparents in order to start building their house. The couple had a tough time of it, since Leandro couldn’t find any work around Saraguro, and by and large it is no longer feasible in Saraguro to make a living strictly from farming; both men and women (particularly young ones) divide their time between managing their ever smaller lands and wage labour in Saraguro, Loja, or Cuenca, as well as selling cuyes, garden grown vegetables, or artisan crafts. As a result, Leandro decided to move back to Quito and send remittances to his wife and new children. This was a solution that pleased no one, since Linda was forced to care for her children and the cattle she had inherited, which meant she never felt she had enough time to do it all herself. Leandro, too, felt lonely and helpless being away for so long from his family, so they

decided to sell the few cattle they owned and rely on subsistence agriculture and whatever else they could to manage together.

Linda's Adventist faith has provided her with a belief system that she feels shelters her family from the hardships of her youth. Many of the practices associated with Catholic feasting in the area, including the heavy drinking and onerous financial burden, are not part of the Adventist tradition, and so their family does not participate in the celebrations. Though they earn a living from tourism projects associated with the new Inkaic movement, they also don't participate in rituals such as Inti Raymi. They, like a number of Christian Evangelicals, other Adventists, and the neo-Inkas themselves, have found alternatives to the Catholic faith that, through the religious cargo system, forms an integral part of community life in the area. Their non-attendance at these frequent feasts means, however, that they do not take part in many of the more social aspects of community life that, like the practice of sharing drinks, offering gifts of liquor, and showing their vulnerability to their neighbours by getting drunk, are so important in how people establish relationships of mutual interdependence. As a result, Leandro has chosen to participate frequently in the regular mingas, as well as help with almost any other tasks related to communal upkeep. This has earned him a reputation as a good comunero, someone who is concerned with the well-being of the community as a whole, though the repeated, sometimes forceful, offers of drink he receives when he does attend a feast keep him at arm's length.

The alternative celebrations like Inti Raymi share many similarities with the Catholic celebrations: they require large outpourings of money (though the sponsors now

include NGO funding), they are relatively public events that bring people together (though only the Inkaic celebrations are touted as touristic events), and they serve as expressions of belief systems and include religious practices. It will be interesting to see if, in the future, the Inkaic celebrations come to eclipse the Catholic cargo system, or if both, as well as other denominational occasions, continue to co-exist and reflect the diversity of beliefs in the area.

What is more, the Inkaic rituals and the cargo feasts evoke two different envisionings of an identity as indigenous. The Catholic celebrations work within a cargo system long recognized as part of Latin American indigenous communal tradition, but come with many of the negative associations of Indianness such as poverty, dirtiness, and heavy drinking. The Inkaic celebrations, on the other hand, portray an indigeneity in line with global conceptualizations of ancient natives, who, too, share in a pastoral tradition, but one divorced from the poverty of real peasant farmers. The Catholic feasts are often criticized by neo-Inkans and others for their too-close association with the church that played such an integral role in colonization and channels funds from poor households into acts of devotion, while the reborn Inkaic ceremonies cleanse the history of Saraguro, attempting to eliminate the contamination of Spanish colonialism and redeem a separate Saraguro history. But the debates over history, over what constitutes true Saraguro tradition that surround both practices do not encompass the entire field of imaginings of the ways of being indigenous.

A youthful alternative

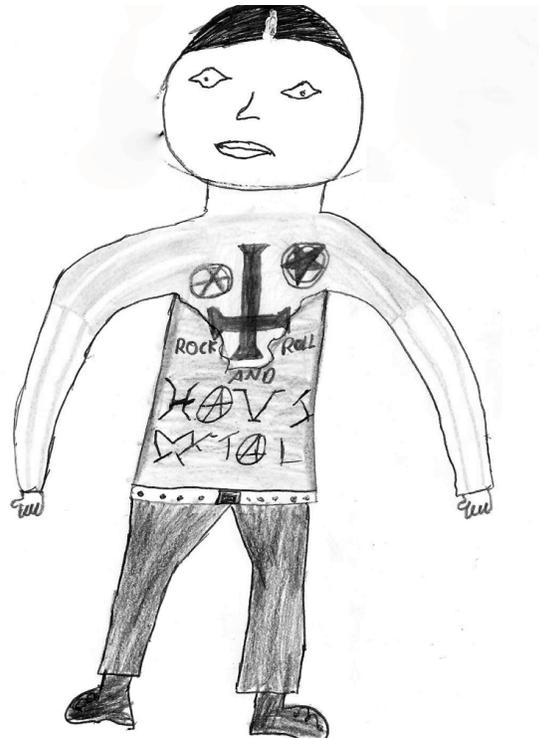
The Inkaic revitalization movement is self-consciously stylized as anti-modern in conception, consistent with a view of indigeniety that places indigenous peoples as suffering continually from the expansion of Spanish, and then capitalist and American colonization. This “anti-modern” (Macas 2000) conception of indigenous cultural revitalization aligns politically with an indigenous movement that is characterized by calls for the protection of alternative, traditional methods of knowing and experiencing the world, as well as for creating spaces of autonomy for indigenous groups. Indigenous persons, as the obvious stewards of traditional lifeways, are seen to act as the sensible voices opposing the ills of civilization. The rhetorical power of the movement is large, but younger Saraguros have found other ways of expressing themselves that are compatible with their self-identification as indigenous and do not strictly rely on ties to an Inkaic past, or even to a particular expression of indigeneity. Rather, the tastes and ambitions of many Saraguro youth point to an alternative conceptualization of Saraguro identity that is both firmly rooted in the “modern” and respectful of a long tradition of Indigeneity.

To the disdain of some, and certainly to the misunderstanding of most parents, a large number of (primarily male) Saraguro youth affiliate themselves with a subculture of heavy metal music⁴. Typified by their appreciation of such North American and European imports such as Metallica, Motley Crue, and even In Flames, wearing black T-shirts with their favourite band logos (often described by older Saraguros as “Satanic”), and forming

⁴ Young Saraguro men are generally more likely to wear the rocker aesthetic and listen to such music, but young women also participate and may also wear band t-shirts on informal occasions. Still, the subculture is generally associated with young men.

their own musical groups, these *rockeros*, as they are locally known, find little that is contradictory in their self-identification as Indigenous and their enjoyment of metal music, often heard blaring from their mobile phones or house during a practice session. Weekend afternoons can bring the echoes of a changing soundscape: when once there might have been a solitary young man moving his family's cows to water with a flute to keep him company, now the sound of the electric guitar and drum set can be heard against the dull, hollow thumping of volleyball outside of the casa comunal. Even during Inti Raymi, the nightly festivities include live heavy metal music that sets itself apart from the Inkaic-inspired Kichwa songs about lost Inka kings, while accordion and drum duos feature at the more understated Catholic feasts.

Such changes are not welcomed by all, and the stylized band shirts that the *rockeros* wear are particularly contentious for those who mourn what they see as the loss of traditional Saraguro dress. Still, most *rockeros* sport their black cortes, and along with their black tops and hats or tuques, do not deviate that much from the accepted style of most adult men. Importantly, these young music lovers do not see themselves as betraying their indigeneity, and, for some, their choice of music actually reflects their perceptions of racial boundaries. Sitting in the central plaza of Saraguro one night, I met a group of young Saraguros who were sharing some trago, listening to some Ecuadorian metal group from a mobile phone placed on the stone bench between them. We got to talking about music, and our favourite bands, and I mentioned that I was more in to punk than metal. Punk, it was explained, was what the young town mestizos listened to. Saraguro youth listen to metal.



Figures 17 and 18: Students from the *Inti Raymi* school in Las Lagunas depict members of their family, re-interpreted with imagery of the students' own interest in metal.

Even though these youth seem to associate their identity as indigenous to their musical preferences, it might be questioned why such a youth subculture should be considered alongside religious festivals. On the one hand, as many of their parents' generation express, they might simply be searching for an expression of difference and resistance to their parents' tastes and desires, an argument often associated with the acts of adolescence. On the other hand, it would seem that musical and stylistic choices are of

a different order than religious or ritualistic ones. But the Catholic and Inkaic feasts are expressions of belief systems that, particularly in the case of the reborn Inkaic rituals, attempt to reflect underlying values and desired lifestyles. In the case of the neo-Inkaic movement, these include a venerated past, an agro-pastoral present and an Indigenous future free from the structures of Western “modernity.” The Inkaic rituals are attempts at defining and dealing with a contemporary indigenous society that people see as in flux. Likewise, a youthful affinity for metal music and culture should be seen as an attempt at definition and finding meaning and place, rather than simply as adolescent rebellion.

Much of the North American sociological focus on youth cultures has treated them as pathological or deviant expressions of a period of adolescence defined as less-than-adulthood. Accordingly, youth are rarely considered cultural agents in their own right, argues Mary Bucholtz (2002). The result has been that work on the period of adolescence, widely considered to be a time of self-transition and stress, has focused on youth culture in psychological and age-defined terms, rather than seeing young people as attempting “acts of semiotic resignification [that] subvert the meanings assigned to the appropriated objects within the dominant culture, often in ways that challenge class arrangements” (Bucholtz 2002:537). By interpreting rockero culture as an attempt at giving meaning to the lives that these youth lead, we open up the possibility of yet another proposed envisioning of indigeneity in Saraguro. These youth find no contradiction in enjoying the fruits brought on by transnationalised Western cultural forms while simultaneously participating, however marginally, in both Catholic feasts as well as attending and discussing the neo-Inkaic re-imagination of local indigeneity. With

family members working and living abroad, with their own lives bringing them to urban centers and rooting them in the rural locality of Saraguro, their interpretations of self do not hinge, as risk the neo-Inkas, on denying the impacts, both positive and negative, of a contemporary “modern” world (see also Van Vleet 2003). While their self-identification as indigenous certainly does not stem *from* a metal aesthetic, rockero culture is not incompatible *with* their indigenous selves.

In a similar vein, Mark Goodale (2006) examines the emergence of indigenous youth rappers in El Alto, Bolivia as part of a “second revolution” that is redefining the place of indigenous peoples within the nation-state, as well as the content of those indigenous identities themselves. Connecting, through their music and lyrics, to racialized subalterns the world over, these rappers are part of what Goodale calls indigenous cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism, as it is generally understood, entails at least a partial rejection of local identity and history in favour of a more inclusive, wider scale of belonging that, at its greatest, produces a moral good of re-creating all people as global citizens, thereby erasing the fractures of nationality and locality (Goodale 2006:639-641). Indigenous cosmopolitanism, meanwhile, means for Goodale that the realm of the indigenous is projected beyond what might be normally expected so that the category itself encompasses more than, say, the ideal of the hyperreal Indian. The result for the El Alto rappers is that they are able to

borrow from a transnational hip-hop culture in a way that projects a “space of expression” beyond El Alto’s narrow and dusty streets, but without sacrificing the meanings that locate their songs within a long indigenous tradition of musical and cultural hybridity. (Goodale 2006:644)

In the end, indigenous youth like the Saraguro rockeros and the El Alto rappers are, much like the neo-Inkas, attempting to trace out a place for indigeneities in the contemporary world that resonate with the expanded influences and possibilities brought on by transnational dialogues, but firmly rooted in the local. The multiple paths to such “new ethnicities” (Hall 1997) mean that while on the global political scale, indigenous politicians and activists the world over are attempting to define the shared meanings and rights of indigenous peoples, even at the local scale there may be no consensus as to what it means to be indigenous.

The possibilities of multiple images of indigeneity

The efforts of neo-Inkaic cultural revitalizationists in the region represent one possible ideal of indigeneity, one that resonates well with global discourses of Indianness. Events such as the Inti Raymi celebrations attempt to depict many of the most common traits associated with indigenous groups: attachment to a deep history, longstanding traditions that inform current practices, devotion to the land from which their food grows, and retention of a language other than the one dominant in society. These displays are aspirational in the sense that while they do not accurately reflect the lives of most contemporary Saraguros, they project a particular future, one that forefronts the importance of a Saraguro ethnicity and of an indigenous lifeway. In this way, similar social movements have the potential to positively impact indigenous lives by validating particular practices heavily associated with being indigenous.

Still, the rhetoric employed by indigenous activists and political leaders when laying out a framework for an indigenous movement poses problems for anthropologists.

Luis Macas' (2000) position that the indigenous community, descended from the ayllu, is the central axis of indigenous society borrows heavily from the works of anthropology like Eric Wolf's concept of the closed, corporate peasant community. The celebration of the ayllu as a bastion of indigeneity against an encroaching Western modernity (see, for example Allen 1988), criticized heavily in the 1990s for ignoring the changing realities of peasant lives in the Andes (Starn 1991), has now become enshrined in the Inti Raymi celebrations and other neo-Inkaic revitalization events taking place in Saraguro. The image of Saraguro indigeneity put forth by the neo-Inkaic movement threatens to become more hyperreal than real, more associated with the cleansed, safe image of the noble Indian preferred for NGO intervention (Ramos 1994). The claims of unbroken cultural links between a pre-colonial past and a modern indigenous present certainly represent particular political projects, but Mary Weismantel is correct that:

the standard for judging a particular image of the ayllu [or community, or indigeneity for that matter] is not whether it is an accurate description of what is or was, but whether it has the power to make itself become so - to will itself into being by capturing the imaginations of others. (2006:91)

The problem for Saraguro, though, is that the image of indigeneity that associates itself with the ayllu is only one among many possible images of indigeneity that each reflect various aspects of life, real and envisioned. What Weismantel calls "capturing the imaginations of others" might just as easily be called hegemonic struggle, as different conceptions of what it means (or what it should mean) to be Saraguro wrestle for control of the discursive space in which identities are contested.

Finally, the border-straddling, “indigenous cosmopolitanism” (Goodale 2006) vein of identification of the Saraguro rockeros provides an opportunity to explode the category of indigeneity beyond the hyperreal, anti-modern envisioning employed by indigenous activists. The “rhetorical opposition between ayllus and Indians on the one hand, and modernity and the West on the other” (Weismantel 2006:96) need not be a central tenet of emerging indigenous identities, and youth subcultures are providing alternative frameworks that negotiate the supposed divide between modernity and indigeneity. Rather than concentrating strictly on the depictions of indigenous lives that inform indigenous social movements, anthropologists would be wise to acknowledge the disparity between the envisionings of these political projects and the lives of those people who call themselves indigenous but whose lives may not accord so easily or cleanly with more mainstream discourses of indigeneity.

Chapter 5 - Conclusions

“Communities,” contemporary theorists assert, have more to do with aspirations and ideals than the realities of social relations. The community idea, so muddled and loaded with romantic assumptions of wholeness, of a rural idyll, of homogeneity, is therefore a relatively poor analytical concept, and yet remains nearly ubiquitous in its use. Early anthropological and sociological examinations of the community idea were often in search of the ideal community, associating it with a cleansed, unified past that could correct the abuses of modern urbanity. Communities, then, were sought for not in the city, but in a countryside that stood as a redoubt of pastoral ideals, face to face interaction, of whole little societies. Little wonder, then, that along the folk-urban continuum, the folk was where communities could be found, though they were constantly seen as under pressure from an encroaching modernity.

Because of the focus on rural societies in community studies, community and peasantry were “mutually constructed as interdependent essentialist categories” (Creed 2006a:35), an association that has made its way into contemporary indigenous discourse, uniting indigenous lifeways with the same mythical community idea. Incorporating anthropological notions of the “closed, corporate peasant community,” indigenous activists such as Luis Macas are able to draw upon a dual nostalgia for the re-emergence of a timeless, pure, native Andean indigenous society, built upon a community idea, similarly located in the past (Macas 2000). In Saraguro, talk of communities as ayllus (or ayllullactas) goes hand in hand with calls for a cultural revitalization attached to an Inkaic past.

Indigenous communities, though, have a more complicated history in Ecuador. One of the problems faced by an emerging Spanish colonial state was how to regulate and extract tribute from a native population that *didn't* live, in the eyes of Spanish administrators, in easily definable, bounded communities. Thus, with the Toledan reforms of the late 16th century, some Indian populations were relocated into reducciones that made governance and evangelical efforts easier. In the 20th century, the Republican state, confronted with the persistent "Indian Problem," where large populations were excluded or seemingly hesitant towards adopting a mestizo lifestyle and identity that conformed with the national envisioning, adopted the 1937 Ley de Comunas. This law, like many attempts at modernizing reform of indigenous peoples, straddled the line between paternalistic protection of what was perceived as a child-like indigenous class and a hesitant acknowledgement of the place of Indians within the nation. Living in legal communities, it was thought, Indians would emerge from their near-barbarism and serfdom, learn the necessary skills of citizens, become part of the rationalization (capitalization) of the rural economy, and through state-oriented education and health reforms, leave behind their anachronistic lifeways and become fully integrated in a mestizo society.

In contemporary Saraguro, the indigenous community now stands both as the local embodiment of the political system, and is also envisioned as the redoubt of indigenous cultural tradition. In acknowledging the sometimes ambiguous place of the indigenous community, it is necessary to ask what the unifying desires are that bring comuneros - those that are members of indigenous communities - together, how those

interests come to be established, and when they hold relevance. The local practices of community building and community participation in Ñamarín - those acts that constitute the maintenance of community for its members - thus speak to the continued importance and relevance of the indigenous community in the lives of comuneros. The direct democracy of monthly assemblies, the oversight, responsibilities, and diffused power of cabildo councils, and the biweekly mingas emphasize how, through labour and the primacy of participation, the indigenous community is re-produced from within. The maintenance of the water system that sustains agro-pastoral production and brings water to the houses of community members serves as a mechanism of integration through which comuneros come to feel that their livelihoods are integrated with their neighbours. Members who spend much of their time outside of the community itself routinely cycle back to Ñamarín to show their participation in communal labour parties, while parents and socially concerned members consider group-wide restrictions on drinking in order to combat problems that many of them face. Despite the increasing diversity in wealth, lifestyle, and even religion, the Ñamarín comuneros engage in practices that they value as being part of community building. To explore these aspects is not to compound the falsely romantic idea of community, but rather to show how participants are able to create what they interpret as constituting community.

Indigenous communities are also integrated into wider realms of influence that, notably, include the state and a national society from which the “Indian” has historically been set apart. Legal indigenous communities have served as the prime locus of governmental intervention in indigenous areas, but they also act as enclaves of sorts

where the terms and conditions of state authority are contested to protect community autonomy. Government provided services - like the local school and daycare - are part of the community space, but there remains an imagination of the locality as separate from the wider political system within which it is embedded, an ideal that was reflected in Eric Wolf's vision of the closed corporate peasant community. In order to maintain some measure of local autonomy, indigenous communities rely on a number of practices, some of which draw on deeply embedded racial fears of indigenous violence. The threats of community justice rely on this fear, but also act to present the image of a community united against acts of transgression. Indigenous groups, however, must balance their desire for autonomy with their identification as citizens, through which they receive critical services and are able to present their demands to the Ecuadorian nation. Over-reliance on violence, or even the threat of violence, may then actually delegitimize the right of indigenous communities to self govern in the eyes of outsiders.

As such, acquiescence is also a valuable tool to assert the local community. In Saraguro, as Luis Macas has suggested, subservience was one method by which Saraguros could maintain their landbase, thereby countering any claims that direct governmental intervention was necessary. Part of this effort entails using the categories made available by dominant groups, such as the rhetoric of inclusion and human or collective rights. Indigenous communities, then, rely on certain essentialized projections of themselves, some of which depend on violent imaginings, in order to create and guard the spaces of autonomy that are desired and also to enjoy certain state services while countering a government's most disadvantageous penetrations at the local level.

The idea of the indigenous community also plays a part in the re-emergence or resurgence of a Saraguro indigeneity that is associated with an Inkaic past in the form of the ayllu. The term indigenous has become a marker of personal and collective identity, the content of which is largely dependent on the revitalization or continuation and portrayal of traditional, longstanding lifeways, and the ideal community, deconstructed in the initial chapters of this thesis, rears its head in contemporary indigenous political discourse. The envisioned community as a redoubt of cultural homeostasis in the wake of an oppressive modernity fits well with the Hyperreal global indigeneity. The increasing connections between regional or state level indigenous groups and organizations and their transnational counterparts mean that these romantic envisionings may also come to permeate local conceptions of indigeneity. In other words, real Indians, in their efforts to secure NGO funding and international recognition, may find themselves conforming to this new indigeneity, forged in the imagination and misunderstandings of the “middle ground” between indigenous groups and global actors, but coming back home to the local to be remade as facets of local ethnicity. The neo-Inkaic cultural revitalization movement, tied so closely as it is to international NGOs and the funding of social and economic development projects in Saraguro, certainly risk certain strategic essentialisms - the portrayal of the ideal indigenous community included. This envisioning of community, though, is also important to secure NGO funding since these NGOs are often convinced of the social capital inherent in indigenous communities, where the close social ties and traditional participatory forms are seen to be indicators of spaces where

development will be participatory, and therefore more able to bring about long term, positive change.

I have tried to reflect the increasing diversity of wealth, education, and religion that has come to distinguish indigenous communities, and one important aspect of that is the availability of alternate conceptualizations of indigeneity in Saraguro. As the rockeros well know, a self-identification as indigenous need not hinge on the hyperreal portrayal of a traditional, anti-modern indigeneity, and can constitute what Mark Goodale has called “Indigenous Cosmopolitanism”: the expansion of indigenous identity to include (or more accurately be compatible with) signifiers beyond what is typically associated with indigeneity. Moreover, the primacy that comuneros place on participation as constituting community seems to indicate that a nostalgic attempt to recreate a past, primordial community may be somewhat misplaced, as the necessities of water system maintenance, and communal labour, along with the continued participation of community members who spend much of their time elsewhere, hint at the continued importance of the indigenous community, regardless of political intent.

Implications for future research

The brief nature of the field research on which this thesis is based leaves much room for future research, both within Saraguro and elsewhere. Perhaps most importantly, the emerging neo-Inkaic cultural revitalization movement, just gaining steam, merits continued attention. I have not been in a position to study it in its fullest, or to discuss the movement with its proponents in any detail, and it is certainly coming to occupy a central discursive role. The relationships between the national indigenous movement, local and

international NGOs, and indigenous persons themselves should be fruitful for further analysis. Likewise, a more thorough examination of the irrigation systems, including their construction and history in the many different highland communities, should present an interesting account of the variation of community histories and politics, of governmental and NGO intervention, and even their ecological sustainability. Such research would likely be relevant not just to cultural anthropologists, but also to the fields of archaeology, political science, and ecology.

I am also curious to know how many of the same issues addressed here are equally relevant to those Saraguro communities that have been established in the warmer lowlands of Yacuambí, where the presence of other indigenous ethnic groups may complicate things. Similarly, an inquiry into the elements of indigeneity and community that remain important to Saraguro ex-patriot communities, such as those in Valencia, Spain, could provide an interesting alternative to the account given here. Finally, the whole story of the proposed legislation that sparked the national protests in May of 2010 remains largely unfinished - at the time of leaving the field, the government had decided to submit it to “pre-legislative” discussion, likely hoping that opposition to it would die down after a few months. While an individual protest is an almost common event in indigenous Ecuador, the previous efforts of other Latin American states to attempt centralization of water resources have certainly not been met with widespread success, and the discussion surrounding Water Law, as well as its possible implications, should certainly be examined in greater detail than I have been able to give.

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